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# Antifeminism in Selected Works of Enrique Jardiel Poncela.

Carlo Di maio

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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ANTIFEMINISM IN SELECTED WORKS OF ENRIQUE JARDIEL PONCELA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Foreign Languages

by

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May, 1974



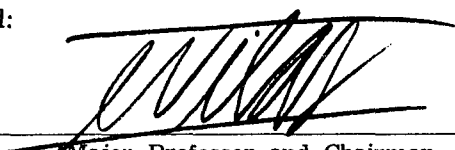
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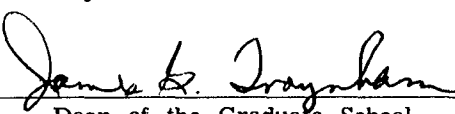
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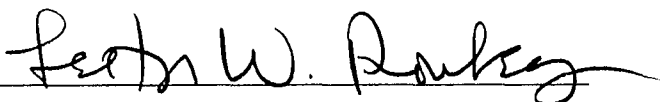
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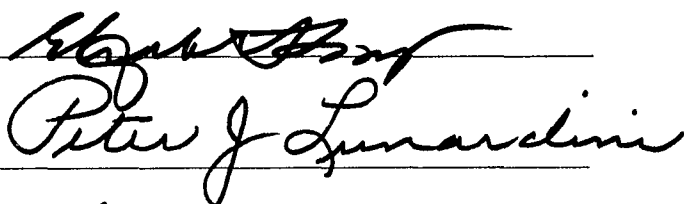
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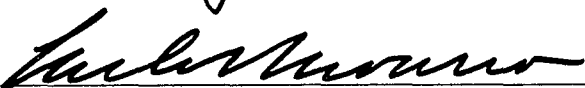
  
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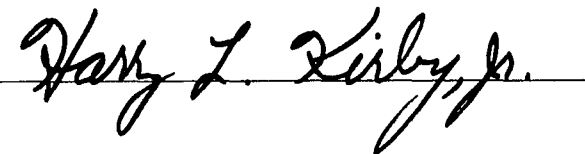
  
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## RICONOSCIMENTO

L'autore di questo studio espressa la sua riconoscenza al Professor Santiago Vilas ed al Professor Harry L. Kirby, Jr. per i suggerimenti ricevuti durante lo svolgimento.

La spinta definitiva, però, mi è stata data dalla mia bimba, Lara Adria, i cui innocenti sorrisi mi servirono di medicina per il compimento di questo studio.

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## ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to discover and to explain antifeminist traits in the novels and selected plays of the Spanish humorist Enrique Jardiel Poncela (1901-1952).

Though antifeminism is not an infrequent occurrence in a literary work, particularly in a patriarchal society such as that of Spain, it is indeed unusual that a writer should be so completely dedicated to this cause. From Amor se escribe sin hache, his first important novel, to La "tournee" de Dios, his last, the antifeminist element is the most consistent theme, and none of the feminine characters escape the bitter attacks of the author. In spite of Jardiel Poncela's insistence to the contrary, the same antifeminist tendency is also discernible in his theater, though on a lesser scale. The analysis of thirteen plays treated in Chapter II reveals the presence of considerable hostility toward women; if the intensity of such a hostility appears negligible when compared to that of his novels, the underlying causes must be found not in the author's conscious attempt to re-evaluate his feelings, but in the very nature of the theatrical genre. It is doubtful that the theater-going public, with its

sensitivity sui generis, would have tolerated unwarranted attacks on women--attacks which were purely personal in nature. However light and inconsequential the antifeminist theme might appear at first in his theater, its presence is, nevertheless, unmistakable, and the author's humorous treatment of it to avoid shocking consequences is nothing short of masterful. Freud maintained that wit is often an indirect means of expressing drives which cannot be expressed directly and that hostile and obscene wit are substitutes for overt sexual activity and hostility respectively. Therefore, there can be little doubt that Jardiel Poncela's humorous treatment of female vices contains undercurrents of seriousness.

There are several possible explanations for the author's display of hostility toward women. One might be sexual guilt which, in a male, has its beginning in early childhood experiences with his mother. From several of Jardiel's autobiographical sketches, it can be determined that his mother exercised a vital influence over him which he rejected outright. There are records indicating that the author sought the advice of a psychoanalyst and that the possibility of an Oedipus complex was clearly suggested as a motivating factor impelling

him to display antifeminist tendencies.

In a patriarchal society such as Spain, most men would rather not be in a position to compete with women in their profession and, since the motives for such an attitude are too selfish to be openly admitted, they are likely to be rationalized. Most women in Jardiel Poncela's works, for example, are attacked on the basis of their natural inferiority to their male counterparts and also on account of the subordinate role the author felt had been assigned to them by nature. One of the principal characteristics of a patriarchal society is a basic fear that, if allowed to free themselves from their restrictions, women will inevitably prevail over men. This fear is one of the most constant concerns of male characters found in both the novels and the plays of Jardiel Poncela, and it is for this reason that female characters are kept under subjection.



## INTRODUCTION

Through the centuries, many writers have expressed varying critical attitudes concerning women and their role in society. Some authors, however, have assumed distinctly antifeminist and even misogynous attitudes in their works. We suspect that particularly in Spain the fervor with which some writers have leveled attacks on women is more than just a momentary expression of hostility. The subject, therefore, merits particular attention.

It is possible to trace antifeminist tendencies directly from the Cantar de Mio Cid such as the subordinate role played by Ximena in her relationship with El Cid; however, not until the thirteenth century, during the reign of Alfonso X (1252-1284), do antifeminist traits become noticeably evident. Antifeminism is usually expressed in situations where women are able to trick men by vicious ingenuity, "disimulo", hypocrisy and "astucia." The most representative works of this period are Calila et Digma and the Libro de los engaños e los assayamientos de las mugeres. In the first, the author states that "...no merecen las mugeres que por ellas sea fecha tan grant traición, ca debe home fiar muy poco por ellas..." The purpose of the second work has been to show all of

the treacheries of which women are capable; each "apólogo" ends with the warning: "...señor, non te di este enxemplo sinon porque sepas el engaño de las mugeres, que son muy fuertes sus artes, et son muchos que non an cabo nin fin."

Similar attitudes are found during the fourteenth century: the "infante" don Manuel, in his enxiemplo De lo que aconteció a un moro con su hermana que daba a entender que era muy medrosa, portrays a woman who is capable of mutilating a dead man just to steal his shroud.

Characterized by unparalleled originality, El libro de Buen Amor has antifeminist elements generously distributed throughout many of its pages. Considering women as a necessary evil, the Arcipreste de Hita viewed the relationship of the two sexes as fire versus ashes: "...el fuego siempre quier estar con la ceniza, como quier que más arde quanto más se atiza..."

The work which contributed perhaps more than any other toward the development of defamatory literature against women is the Italian Labirinto d'amore, also known as the Corbaccio, by Giovanni Boccaccio. This book found many followers, chief among whom in Spain was Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, Arcipreste de Talavera. Speaking about the forces which move women to love, the Arcipreste states in his Reprobación del amor mundano or Corbacho that

"...el motivo del amor de la muger es por alcançar e aver, por quanto naturalmente les proviene que todas las más de las mugeres son avariçiosas e quando algo alcançan son muy tenientes." The hostile treatment of women during this period was somewhat moderated by the introduction of courtly love; however, rather than supplanting the old negative attitude, it coexisted side by side with it as evidence of different moods.

During the sixteenth century, the Renaissance brought new themes of interpretation to the subject. The principal aspect of the antifeminist controversy surrounded the intellectual capacity of women, while other aspects were either ignored or left to writers of little merit. Fray Luis de León felt that women did not engage in intellectual endeavors because nature gave them a very limited capacity for such activities.

In the seventeenth century Francisco de Quevedo, continuing a theme initiated by Góngora, treated the matter of women and morality. He stated in El criticón: "Más vale la maldad del varón que el bien de la mujer...porque menos mal te hará un hombre que te persiga que una mujer que te siga."

The antifeminist controversy continued rather moderately during the eighteenth century. Laurencio Manco de

Olivares, a rather obscure figure today, reached the peak of antifeminist expression in this century by stating that "...a mí sólo me basta acordarme que nací de mugeres, para aborrecer la vida..."

With the advent of Romanticism during the nineteenth century women became an inspiration for poetry. It is as a result of this that many future antifeminists, among them Jardiel Poncela, attempted to justify their writings as an effort to reverse what they considered to be an exaggerated trend to overidealize women. During the nineteenth century the realistic novelists also continued the controversy, but on a lesser scale. Benito Pérez Galdós, though definitely not an antifeminist, approached the problem of woman's emancipation but sided with the traditionalists in favor of the view that woman's place is the home.

Antifeminism has been, thus, a prominent theme in Spanish literature. The purpose of this study is to examine it and to explain its different manifestations in the writings of Enrique Jardiel Poncela (1901-1952), one of the greatest Spanish humorists of the twentieth century. Realizing the importance of cultural factors which might have encouraged expressions of hostility and attacks on women, I will try to document certain contributing factors

such as the Christian denigration of sex, the patriarchal aspect of Spanish society and also the economical dependence of women. In the twentieth century one of the influences most strongly felt in our society has been that of Sigmund Freud and his study of the subconscious. One of the most vital of his contributions has undoubtedly been his theory of the Oedipus complex and the tremendous importance of the mother in the son-mother relationship of early childhood. Freud expressed the theory that the male child's initial erotic attachment to his mother and the mother's subsequent and inevitable rejection of this love in favor of an adult male, the father, helps to explain partly why so many women have been attacked on the basis of unfaithfulness. There is ample evidence that Jardiel Poncela was aware of the contributions made by Freud and that at one time he even sought the help of a psychoanalyst. There is also some evidence that his mother, Marcelina Jardiel Poncela, was possessive and domineering, which might have resulted in Jardiel's transferring his mother's shortcomings to other women. At times it is difficult to establish whether Jardiel Poncela's attacks on women are caused by a deep sentiment of antifeminism, or whether they constitute attacks against and satire of what he considered to be excessive overidealization of

them. Though by today's standards it is unusual to find a literary work published during our author's life without at least some mild manifestation of antifeminism, it is indeed rare for an author to be so completely dedicated to the cause as was Jardiel Poncela. From his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache (1928), to his last, La "tournee" de Dios (1932), as well as in general throughout his theater, the antifeminist element is notably present; it is, in fact, the most consistent theme in his works. At no time does one feel that the author disassociates the antifeminist sentiments from his own personal point of view. His autobiographical sketches match faithfully the intensity of antifeminism found in his works, though here this hostility has been overlooked, since, for the most part, it is incorporated in comical situations. There is little doubt, however, that the numerous jokes do contain undercurrents of seriousness. As Katharine Rogers expressed in her book, The Troublesome Helpmate, "...wit is often an indirect means of expressing drives which cannot be directly expressed. Just as obscene wit is a substitute for overt sexual activity, hostile wit is a substitute for direct physical or verbal expression of hostility." Few would admit their own antifeminist feelings since society has found them deplorable, especially

in the twentieth century, and it is for this reason mainly that most writers have tried to hide their true feelings by expressing them in a masked form. We see, for example, that most of Jardiel's antagonism is directed against women with whom we would not normally sympathize, such as prostitutes and adulteresses. At times, his hostility is projected in such a way that instead of admitting that his numerous relationships with women (which led to four illegitimate children) are sexually exploitative, he insists instead that women exploit and even betray him because they fail to possess the necessary prerequisites of the ideal woman.

This study includes not only those manifestations of antifeminism expressed by Jardiel Poncela the man, but also those of the characters he created; here there is little doubt that many of his female characters represent real women with whom he had been involved. Also, the environment and circumstances in which these characters move seem to point to real life situations experienced by the author. A theme often recurring in Jardiel's works is that of the inferior nature of women and the need to keep them subordinate to men.

Although generally all of Jardiel's writings manifest hostility against women, I feel it is justified, due to

the large number of his plays, to select only major theatrical works, omitting those few minor productions which neither detract from nor add to the point to be made. A brief summary of his plays will be included since most of them are not known outside of Spain. This will serve to establish a proper frame of reference and will ultimately facilitate discussion and analysis of the characters, leading, hopefully, to a better understanding of his philosophy. As for his novels, his first one, El plano astral, will not be discussed since Jardiel did not consider it representative of his literary credo. It is mainly in this genre that Jardiel's antifeminism is more poignant; consequently, the remaining four novels are the ones that merit special attention. Because of the disparateness of antifeminist elements contained in the novels, it is thought appropriate to analyze them from fourteen specific aspects.

The plays as well as the novels will be studied for possible stylistic deviations and parallels with regard to characters, ideas, and situations. Finally, if we are to recognize the tremendous contribution which Jardiel, aside from his antifeminism, made to both the theater and the novel through the use of "lo cómico", it is essential that his credo on this subject be explored. In this regard,



I will analyze three basic points of his belief: first, Jardiel's interpretation of the terms "humor" and "humorismo"; second, what he considered to be the difference between "humorismo" and "lo cómico" and third, how he made use of these tools in his novels and plays.

## CHAPTER I

### LITERARY CHARACTERIZATION OF JARDIEL PONCELA

It is ironic indeed that Jardiel Poncela is remembered by some critics today not so much because of his vigorous and refreshing contribution to the Spanish stage but for his five novels.<sup>1</sup> Jardiel Poncela took considerable pains in organizing his theatrical repertory, laboriously seeking to inform the theater-going public of his techniques so that they might be better prepared to understand and appreciate his plays.

Jardiel Poncela's interest in the stage developed out of a need to contribute fresh ideas to a genre which he felt was in crisis. He had a profound concern for the future of the Spanish stage, and his numerous theories on how this troubled genre could be rejuvenated are both refreshing and original. Jardiel considered the theater to be a personal challenge and, as such, the center of his literary activity. He had witnessed with sadness the many empty theaters of Spain and had listened, unconvinced and

<sup>1</sup> Such is the view expressed by Eugenio G. de Nora in his book, La novela española contemporanea (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), II.

unmoved, to the explanation that the theaters were empty because of the economic conditions of the country. If this were the reason, he maintained, movie houses should be empty also. He felt that the lack of spectator interest in the theater was due mainly to an "ausencia de espíritu" which was to be blamed in turn on the three pillars on which the Spanish theater rested: the authors, the actors, and the critics.

#### THE AUTHORS

According to Jardiel Poncela, too many authors, indeed most of them, did not write enough about the stage; therefore, the theater-going public was unaware of the purpose or purposes behind particular theatrical works. Jardiel Poncela considered a theatrical prologue an absolute necessity and he regularly included one with every play he staged during his career. There could only be one reason, he maintained, why most authors failed to write about the theater: most of them did not know how to write. He went even further: "...nuestros autores teatrales cuando escriben hacen más daño en el idioma que

un buey galopando por un techo de vidrio."<sup>2</sup> Most of the contemporary Spanish authors, he asserted, are not preoccupied with literature and, consequently, read very little of what was published on the subject, either at home or abroad. What was more important, he continued, was the fact that they did not feel their art; they lacked the sensitivity which distinguished an excellent author from a mediocre one. Failure of these authors to travel and to learn from experiences of new places resulted, as he saw it, in a confused and at times erroneous understanding of the intellectual currents of the world.

Jardiel Poncela seemed suddenly to change the tone of his critique of dramatists when he maintained that it was not necessary to know how to write well in order to be successful on the stage. According to Jardiel, in a theatrical performance it is not necessary to present philosophical, historical, biological and metaphysical concepts because the spectator would not accept them. At times, even originality might be detrimental because the middle class, which is the genuine representative of the theater-going public, is repulsed by anything original

<sup>2</sup> Enrique Jardiel Poncela, "Tres comedias con un solo ensayo," Obras Completas (Barcelona: Ahr, 1969), p. 88.

and, above all, it becomes irritated by the "inverosímil." Jardiel viewed the theater not as an art but rather as an instinct; even though some authors may be gifted and original, if they lack instinct they also lack the necessary formula for success. What Jardiel seemed to imply here is that the laws which must be obeyed by authors, if they want to succeed, are those expressed by Lope in his Arte nuevo de hacer comedias, namely that:

porque, como las paga el vulgo, es justo  
hablarle en necio para darle gusto.<sup>3</sup>

Far from attributing all of the blame to authors, Jardiel pointed to the "ambiente" as another factor contributing to dramatic mediocrity. He stated: "...el ambiente lo es todo, como lo es la costumbre. El ambiente empuja a una misma mujer a convertirse en una gran dama o en una prostituta; el ambiente arrastra al mismo hombre al refinamiento o a la abyección; el ambiente hace un animal alado a un nielálope; el ambiente crea un niño inteligente o un niño idiota; el ambiente engendra un 'escritor' o un 'autor teatral'..."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lope de Vega, Arte nuevo de hacer comedias (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1967), p. 12

<sup>4</sup> Enrique Jardiel Poncela, "Tres comedias con un solo ensayo," Obras Completas (Barcelona: Ahr, 1969), p. 107.

## THE ACTORS

If Jardiel Poncela had very few kind words for authors, he harbored even less affection for actors: "son tan pocos," he stated, "que caben juntos en una cabina telefónica, y estando dentro, se podría cerrar holgadamente la puerta..."<sup>5</sup> Contrary to the authors who seldom travel, actors are often on the road to satisfy the pressing needs of their profession. For this reason, Jardiel claimed, they have little or no time to engage in intellectual curiosity and to learn about places they visit. At the peak of the actor's concern lies not a wish to advance his professional level but, as Jardiel stated, "...le preocupa el contrato, la nómina, y la satisfacción de su vanidad inconmensurable, insaciable, infinita."<sup>6</sup> Most of them, Jardiel observed, have a peculiar understanding of the merit of an author. If a play is successful and consequently contributed to the financial stability of the actor, then "...el autor es genial y se le besa en la coronilla..." If, on the other hand, the play meets with the hostility of the public, "...el autor es un cretino

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

y se le escupen los zapatos al pasar." Perhaps one of the greatest faults Jardiel found with the Spanish actor was his tendency to change the lines written by the author "...a su gusto (a su mal gusto...)"<sup>7</sup> This tendency, which he referred to as "morcillas," is particularly detrimental to humorist writers because it occurs with more frequency in their works. It is useless to correct the damage or to try to prevent it because "...su incultura [la de los actores] y su vanidad no pueden nunca admitir el propio error y antes pensará que el autor es un majadero y un orgulloso que sospechar en sí mismo una naturaleza cretina."<sup>8</sup>

#### THE CRITICS

The importance of the critic, according to Jardiel Poncela, is paralleled only by that of the author. He divided the Spanish critics into two groups: those who had acquired their status because of their own merits and those whose profession had nothing to do with their individual ability. The typical Spanish critic, according to Jardiel, lacked the necessary enthusiasm for his work.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

He was perhaps the only professional in the world who did not publish books or articles on literary criticism and abused old clichés. Like actors, critics were often guilty of excessive vanity; they engaged in what he termed "narcisismo literario" intended only to gratify their own cause. Jardiel added that they lacked the necessary criteria to distinguish a good work or performance from a poor one. If a playwright was unknown, it was likely that the critic would be at a complete loss in judging this man's work because he was not in a position to use old and familiar clichés. Often the victim of unduly harsh and unjust criticism of his plays and novels, Jardiel maintained that the Spanish critic was possessed by a natural destructive tendency toward the work he criticized. Rather than nourish a perennial negative attitude, especially toward young and unknown authors, Jardiel felt that the critic's goal should be to complete "la obra" of the author and "...acumular esfuerzos para perfeccionarla."

Jardiel's interest in the stage developed at an early age. He recalled that the first play he watched with intense interest was Arniches' La sobrina del cura.<sup>9</sup> He was scarcely eleven years old then, and from this point

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 140.



+ /

on his love for the theater develop undaunted. His first experience as a dramatist came in 1916, with a comic piece in two acts by the title of Dádivas quebrantan peñas which he wrote in collaboration with his close friend and neighbor Serafín Adame Martínez. This play marked the beginning of Jardiel's long association with the theater which never ceased, except during the four years--1928 through 1932--in which he published his four most important novels. While writing in collaboration with Adame Martínez, Jardiel Poncela never staged or published any of his works. The two simply wrote out of the necessity to create and to release nervous tensions. This relationship lasted until 1926; at this time, because of an argument concerning a woman, they parted permanently. Jardiel generously donated all of their past works to his collaborator agreeing that he could dispose of them in any manner he saw fit. At this point, the original urge to write for the sheer joy of writing no longer motivated Jardiel; his facility to express himself had also decreased, a phenomenon he considered normal since "...esa facilidad...es incompatible con el escritor, pues cuando existe no existe el escritor, y cuando existe el escritor deja de existir ella."<sup>10</sup> He

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

began what might be termed an examination of his literary conscience the result of which he stated in two simple sentences: "Ya me repugnaba lo dramático. Y ya adoraba lo cómico, pero de cierto modo." Jardiel had already established a concept of what "humorismo" meant to him. He had noted the presence of humoristic elements in books and short stories but could not understand the reasons why these elements were not brought to the stage by those authors who were in a position to do so. Inspired and confident that he could improve and rejuvenate the Spanish theater, Jardiel undertook the task of introducing "humorismo" on the stage. For him, this meant first the upgrading of "lo cómico" basing it on analysis and producing the necessary change so that "lo cómico" could penetrate into the sphere of "lo humorístico." He considered this transformation to be the essence of his new concept; as for realization, he had definite plans which he felt would inject new vigor in this genre bringing it back to a level of acceptance and approbation. Noting the same, boresome recurrence of old themes, Jardiel's first step was to introduce "...posible novedad en los temas." This, of course, had already been tried by others; however, he felt that it was necessary to introduce "peculiaridad en el diálogo," to complement the novelty of the theme. Jardiel maintained that very little

could be accomplished without the "...supresión de antecedentes" which, in turn, would create a posible "...novedad en las situaciones..., novedad en los enfoques y en los desarrollos."<sup>11</sup>

#### JARDIEL PONCELA AND HIS CONCEPT OF "HUMORISMO"

Jardiel Poncela never actually defined "humorismo" nor did he ever attempt to determine exactly what is "humorístico" and "cómico!" In trying, he asserted, "sería tan disparatado como lo sería el emprender la tarea de separar la arena del polvo en el desierto del Sahara..."<sup>12</sup> Likewise, an attempt to establish the nature of "lo humorístico" he stated, would be like attempting "clavar una mariposa utilizando para ello un palo del telegrafo."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Azorín was moved by the same concern for the Spanish stage when he proposed a theater based on "super-realismo." The fact that he was not successful might be attributed to his failure to introduce a new "diálogo" to complement the novelty of the theme.

<sup>12</sup> Enrique Jardiel Poncela, "Tres comedias con un solo ensayo," Obras Completas (Barcelona: Ahr, 1969), p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

He did not consider humor to be the effort or force of a definite school but rather an analytical inclination of the soul which converts what has been analyzed into laughter. He strongly disputed the argument maintained by many of his contemporaries that humor is the exclusive gift of northern races, much less that of Britain. He pointed out that in Spain, particularly in Castille, humor has always been and is an inherent characteristic of the people and certainly not a modern phenomenon. Jardiel realized that his determination to upgrade "lo cómico" to "humorismo" might lead to the erroneous interpretation and conclusion that these inclinations are antithetical to one another; for this reason Jardiel, reacting perhaps to the negative criticism given to his works, strongly opposed the view of those who theorized that a comic work is by far inferior to a humoristic work. He stated: "lo cómico, igual que lo trágico, es superior cuando es bueno y es inferior cuando es malo; pero no es malo ni inferior 'per se'..."<sup>14</sup> He considered it absurdity to submit humor to strict and absolute rules in the same manner as a literary movement--as absurd as to establish rules for someone's

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

soul. The concept that humor is an aspect of literature is incorrect, according to Jardiel; it is rather "una singularidad del espíritu." Jardiel particularly emphasized this last point underlining the different aspects of humor as manifested by the people of nordic countries and Britain and the type of humor peculiar to the Spanish temperament. The former is at times melancholic and at times sweet and tender; the latter is sour, violent and often totally "descarnado."

The first practical application of Jardiel's theories to the theater was reflected in his first comedy, Una noche de primavera sin sueño (1927). However, he admitted that after finishing the first act he began reconsidering his new theatrical credo and he feared that it would not be understood; for this reason, he revised the play in accordance with more traditional precepts. The success that the play enjoyed, though achieved by compromising his theatrical philosophy, made it possible, nevertheless, for Jardiel to make a significant debut on the stage. The two comedies which followed, El rápido de las 8 y 40 and Madame de Delfos incorporated some aspects of humor but he was unable to have actors and impresarios stage them because the former found them "inverosímiles" and the

latter found them "irrepresentables." Probably because he was discouraged by this unexpected setback and temporarily frustrated in his attempt to express his new theories on the stage, Jardiel began writing his first novel, Amor se escribe sin hache, completing it in 1928. A year later, encouraged by the enormous success of this work, Jardiel published his second novel, ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! In answer to speculations that he would abandon future theatrical ambitions in favor of the more profitable endeavor of writing novels, Jardiel stated that "...el éxito logrado en ese género, lejos de afirmar mi alejamiento de la escena, volvió a despertarme la ambición de hacer el Teatro deseado."<sup>15</sup> His ambition to write for the theater was finally satisfied toward the end of 1929 when he staged El cadáver del señor García, a comedy, he claimed, in which "...resumí todos mis propósitos escénicos." The comedy was coolly received by the public and viciously attacked by the critics who tore it apart precisely because of the expression of those ideas which Jardiel had wanted to convey, namely "...la ausencia absoluta de referencias y antecedentes, la novedad del tema y de las incidencias, la unidad insupe-

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

table de acción, de lugar y de tiempo y el alarde de mantener los tres actos con una misma situación."<sup>16</sup> As a result of this setback, Jardiel abandoned his literary principles and his ideas of reform in favor of more traditional and therefore more acceptable theatrical norms. This new approach resulted in Margarita, Armando y su padre and Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal, both staged in 1930. To fully understand and justify this change of attitude one must realize that he was experiencing financial difficulties during this period. As a young, unknown, and inexperienced author whose only income were the royalties received for short newspaper articles, Jardiel Poncela found it imperative to re-evaluate his attitudes concerning the theater. He never entertained the thought of abandoning his ideas permanently; rather, he considered this compromise as an unwarranted intermission but, nevertheless, a necessity for a beginner if he was to acquire enough financial independence to ignore the critics. In this connection, he stated: "...¿Vale la pena de acumular dificultades en el ejercicio del Teatro intentando mejorarlo y corriendo el riesgo de no poder vencer esas dificultades, para fracasar ante el público,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

perder la confianza de los profesionales y no ver compensado el fracaso por las palabras estimulantes de la crítica?...No, no vale la pena al principio. No vale la pena hasta no poseer una independencia económica y una absoluta solvencia teatral y literaria. No vale la pena no proceder sobre seguro."<sup>17</sup> The opportunity presented itself when López Rubio, who was in Hollywood to head the Spanish language section of the Fox Film Corporation, invited him to come to the United States to help him with the dubbing of Spanish language films. This trip, the first of several to this country, as well as other trips to South America and France, was the beginning of a period of long-sought financial stability. For the first time Jardiel felt reassured by his financial conditions and, encouraged by his friends, he returned with new interest to the theater. The first of a long series of plays written according to his theories, Angelina, o el honor de un brigadier was the work which hurled Jardiel to theatrical prominence and leadership among playwrights in Spain. He held this position until his death on February 18, 1952. His attitude and his insistence on realizing his goal can best be described with his own words. He

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



stated: "...el incorporar la fantasía y la inverosimilitud a la escena era el blanco al que, desde mis primeros ensayos, dirigí las flechas, haciendo diana unas veces, clavándolas en el anillo exterior otras y prendiéndolas en el vacío cuando fallaron los nervios o el pulso."<sup>18</sup> If circumstantial fate, first, and ill health, later, were able to temporarily misdirect these "flechas" nothing could induce him to relent in his endeavor to prevail in his goal.

#### A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF JARDIEL PONCELA

Critics generally held unfavorable opinions of Jardiel Poncela's works. However, in all fairness to him, one must conclude that he was unjustly and unfairly criticized; with few exceptions, critics failed to understand the nature of his theatrical theories and they did not see in his theater a refreshing innovation and originality of expression through the use of humor seldom surpassed by other humorists. However, toward the end of his life and after his death, a few literary historians and critics saw a need for re-evaluating Jardiel Poncela's works. Ramón

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Gómez de la Serna,<sup>19</sup> who perhaps better than anyone else understood Jardiel, called him "pesimista" in one respect and "burlón" in another, resembling "...un par de gemelos, unos mellizos sonriente el uno, lóbrego el otro." (p. 1159) Crediting Jardiel with having conceived "...[una] nueva teoría de lo cómico," Ramón claims that Jardiel wrote his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache as his entry in a competition with members of a literary group formed by Ramón called Pandilla de Humoristas. Ramón was the first who saw in him "un hombre desesperado" and, recognizing this, he often invited Jardiel to take part in the famous "tertulia literaria" at the Café Pombo, as he stated "...[no] para que nos alegrase, [sino] para alegrarle a él." (p. 1161) Ramón stated that Jardiel "...hizo lo mejor que se puede hacer con el teatro, trastornarlo, ensayar sombras y luces, ausencias y presencias removiendo su gran azar." (p. 1162) But he blamed Jardiel's problems as well as his pessimism on the theater which, though financially rewarding in one aspect, was frequently responsible for emotional letdowns because in

<sup>19</sup> All references to Ramón Gómez de la Serna's impressions of Jardiel Poncela are from his Retratos completos, (Madrid: Aguilar, 1961). To avoid undue repetition, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses.

the theater the heart suffers "...mayores oscilaciones que el de un bolsista." (pp. 1162-1163) There is hardly any doubt that Ramón would have preferred that Jardiel Poncela concentrate his efforts fully on writing novels which he knew were at the highest of popularity in Spain and were read by all and which he considered "...como medicina alegre y dicharachera." (p. 1163) Ramón saw in Jardiel's numerous and unfortunate experiences with women "...un casanovismo donjuanesco con graciosa elocuencia..." (p. 1163) and he considered his frequent bursts of hostility and attacks against women only in a superficial manner: "...mujeres alegres, caprichosas y bellas revelan su infidelidad, que, tomada a broma por el humorista, no resulta tan dolorosa." (p. 1163) Acknowledging Jardiel's tremendous capacity for work, Ramón added that he tried, through his works, to build "...una especie de Arca de Noé cómica" filled with objects, animals and observations. (p. 1164) During a period when most humorists overlooked the more serious and transcendental aspects of life, Ramón called Jardiel "...un maestro en el suspenso cómico, [que] tuvo el delirio de la conciencia cómica, procurando que los lectores abriesen los ojos a un cielo de mayor justicia. Todo eso le llevaba al sarcasmo y al amargor." (p. 1164) At a time when it would have been financially

rewarding for him to compromise his literary credo in favor of a more traditional and certainly more acceptable approach, Ramón praised Jardiel stating that "...pudiendo haber sido un hipócrita currinche y habiéndole convenido halagar las ideas y los niveles del público cerril, no ha querido pasar por eso y aprovechó toda coyuntura para ser sincero y rechazar lo plebeyo y las admiraciones consagradas." (p. 1165)

A more negative criticism of the works of Jardiel Poncela is expressed by Eugenio G. de Nora.<sup>20</sup> Taking the unusual position that, after his death, Jardiel has come to be known more for his novels than for his plays, de Nora maintains that the main theme in his novels is "erotismo" treated humoristically. This is perhaps the only justified statement in his entire appraisal of Jardiel Poncela. Refusing to concede the original nature of Jardiel's writings, de Nora sustains that before him, J. Belda had treated the satire of humor and the erotic-pornographic novel, and that W. Fernández Flórez had already expressed in his Relato inmoral "...el propósito

<sup>20</sup> All references to Eugenio G. de Nora's impressions of Jardiel Poncela are contained in Volume II of his work, La novela española contemporánea (1927-1932), 2nd ed. (Madrid: Gredos, 1968). To avoid undue repetition, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses.

aleccionador en la burla, el contraste doblemente crítico entre las versiones librescas del amor y la observación de la vida real, el pesimismo entre regocijado y amargo..."

(p. 259) Referring to the uncomplimentary manner with which he treats women, de Nora interprets Jardiel's anti-feminism as full-fledged misogyny, "...una misoginia feroz que sigue al derrumbamiento del ideal erótico."

(p. 259) Whereas Ramón Gómez de la Serna had praised Jardiel's originality of style, de Nora saw in his mode of writing "...una ligereza amarga, con un dolido desenfado peculiar." (p. 260) De Nora maintains that "...el novelista se burla, ante todo (parece divertirse burlándose), del objeto supuesto de adoración sentimental y erótica: la mujer." (p. 260) While correctly diagnosing the joking and scoffing aspect of Jardiel as a form of hostility directed against women, a view which had already been expressed by Ramón, his criticism would have been much more constructive had he been able to recognize the symptoms of Jardiel's deep-rooted emotional and psychological complexes. De Nora, noting the similar treatment of themes and handling of female characters, holds the view that "...con escaso esfuerzo..." Jardiel's novels could be reduced "...a una sola novela..." and female protagonists "...a una sola protagonista..." (p. 260)

He adds, furthermore, that within the framework of humoristic caricature, Jardiel's heroines are "algo entre descabalado, grotesco y monstruoso: absurdo." (p. 260) Perhaps justifying Jardiel's contempt for critics, de Nora condemns the lacks of precisely those aspects of style which the writer has wanted to avoid, namely the "...conexión normal, lógica o previsible..." of the action. (p. 261)

José María Pemán speaks kindly of Jardiel. Commenting on his handling of humor, Pemán remarks that "Jardiel sabía que el humor, como calidad literaria, no en balde tenía el mismo nombre que el humor como elemento de la fisiología y la medicina hipocrática. Los humores en equilibrio y armonía significan la salud. La desarmonía de los humores y predominio de uno de ellos, es la enfermedad. Y el aprovechamiento de ese humor constitucional humano para enfrentarlo con una circunstancia contradictoria es el "humor" como literatura..."<sup>21</sup>

According to Pemán, Jardiel's writings, as Ramón had already observed, stemmed out of sadness and are impregnated with melancholic ideas of decadence and sorrow. His laughter, the critic observes, was like a siren of alarm--

<sup>21</sup> José María Pemán, "Prólogo," *Obra Inédita* [de Jardiel Poncela] (Barcelona: Ahr, 1967), pp. 13-14.

the sound of an ambulance or that of a fire truck.

Perhaps the most significant tribute paid to Jardiel was rendered to him by Jacinto Benavente in a letter written in 1948. Praising Jardiel as a humorist, Benavente acknowledged the intricate task of creating a comic work. He wrote: "Creo como usted que es más difícil ser autor cómico que autor dramático. En un drama cuando se tiene el asunto se tiene todo, en una comedia cuando se tiene el asunto aún no se tiene nada. Creo también que dentro de unos años--yo no podré verlo--muchas obras dramáticas parecerán muy cómicas y muchas obras cómicas muy serias."<sup>22</sup>

Undoubtedly, the individual who more than any other has studied the great literary importance of Jardiel Poncela is Rafael Flórez.<sup>23</sup> He saw two influencing factors in the early works of Jardiel Poncela: the theater of Carlos Arniches and Enrique García Álvarez. On the frequently-asked question of whether the theater or the novel came first in the literary essence of Jardiel Poncela,

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> All references to Flórez's impressions of Jardiel Poncela are contained in Jardiel Poncela (Madrid: Ediciones y Publicaciones Españolas, 1969). To avoid undue repetition, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses. Rafael Flórez is also the author of a biography of Jardiel Poncela, Mío Jardiel (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1966).

Flórez stated that the latter preceded the former, "... aunque el Teatro acabase siendo su fuerte posteriormente," adding, furthermore that "...el rigor real de lo económico en Jardiel y su fuerte inclinación de siempre por el Teatro, le llevaron a la perfección de una personalidad de autor teatral inconmensurable; personalidad que superó a la de novelista o autor de libros." (p. 64) Expressing himself on the "sentido mandragónico de la cuestión" which alludes to the incomprehensible attitude of the critics who generally viewed Jardiel's writings in a negative fashion, Flórez disagrees with Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, who had classified him along with Ionesco and had said that in Jardiel's works "...lo absurdo acaba siempre por ser lógicamente explicado..." (p. 101) Along the same line, Flórez attacks Martin Esslin, whose book on the theories of the absurd he regards as "...una miopía sin límites..." for failing to include either Jardiel Poncela or Ramón Gómez de la Serna among the "cuatro figuras clave de la tendencia." (p. 103)

In a more recent study on humor and its application to the contemporary Spanish novel, Santiago Vilas speaks of Jardiel as a novelist who represents "el puente entre Ramón y Laiglesias" and whose theater fixes "...la normas conceptuales y formales de un teatro de humor no igualado



hasta hoy y que influye decisivamente en los autores posteriores. He concludes that Jardiel's theater is "...una nueva dimensión del 'teatro del absurdo'..."<sup>24</sup>

Vilas correctly observes that Jardiel's principal inclination was the stage while Rafael Flórez, lamenting the lack of treatment of Jardiel in a separate chapter, takes issue with Vilas on this appraisal, arguing that the novel had been "...su fuerza impenable, su ataque de combate en sus primeras grandes ofensivas..." However, in maintaining this, Flórez seems to contradict himself since he had sustained earlier in his book that Jardiel's strong inclination toward the theater culminated in a perfection of his theater personality which surpassed that of novelist. (p. 64)

In spite of the often divergent critical opinions, no one seems to question Jardiel's prominence as a humorist. Most of the literary historians and critics who have examined his works share the same favorable conviction that his generous contribution to the humoristic repertoire of the Spanish theater is truly imaginative and unquestionably original.

<sup>24</sup> Santiago Vilas, El humor y la novela española contemporánea (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1968), pp. 14 and 109.

Perhaps, the journalist Tomás Borrás best summarized the extent of this impact of Jardiel when he wrote:

Enrique Jardiel Poncela es el autor más discutido de nuestros días. En plena juventud, con un temperamento satírico y burlesco de primer orden, con una audacia y un arranque geniales, Jardiel Poncela tiene la propiedad de indignar hasta el paroxismo a ciertos espectadores y de hacerse partidarios hasta el límite de lo fanático. Su originalidad está fuera de la normalidad teatral española; por ello la labor de Jardiel tiene un aire cosmopolita que a veces "desconcierta a los indocumentados". Su Teatro es violento, locamente arbitrario, pero de la mejor ley en cuanto a ingenio sin trabas, lleno de fantasía y fuera de los márgenes de lo preceptivo.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 148

## CHAPTER II

### WOMEN IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF JARDIEL PONCELA

Jardiel Poncela wrote considerably about his concept of women and love.<sup>26</sup> He had the habit of telling the reader details such as circumstances in which a particular work was conceived and written; he also makes references dealing with his own private life and inner thoughts. These are not intended as confessions, but, as he states: "...he considerado preciso dejar aclarado todo lo referente a mi vida íntima y amorosa, que todo el mundo ignora, para evitar errores e inexactitudes en una posible biografía futura..." (OI, p. 27)

The study of Jardiel Poncela's life reveals that, if we are to believe his own self-assessment, he exercised a tremendous charm over women and, consequently, he prided himself in his conquests of them. The fact that many women were attracted to him, in spite of his unattractive physical appearance, and that some of these women loved

<sup>26</sup> All references to Jardiel's impressions of women and love are from his Obras completas, 4 vols (Barcelona: Ahr, 1969), and from his Obra inédita, (Barcelona: Ahr, 1967). To avoid undue repetitions, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses.

him, cannot be doubted; the four illegitimate children he fathered stand as living proof. Such matters as reciprocal attraction and extended relationships usually yield mutual influence. In the novels of Jardiel Poncela and, with few exceptions, in his plays, we can detect ample evidence of influence pointing to the fact that most of the women whom he knew, including his mother, helped him conceptualize the female characters he created. Certainly, one must not overlook the influence of past and current literature on the subject of women; however, its effects, when compared to his own real life experiences must be regarded as rather minimal. Literary influence, for the most part, tends to perpetuate old types whereas Jardiel Poncela, as a man of unlimited imaginative powers, drew new and vital lines directly from his own experiences.

Viewing himself as a romantic, Jardiel states that "...en el fondo, como todos los románticos y los sentimentales, soy un sensual, pues el romanticismo no es sino la aleación de la sensualidad con la idea de la muerte."

(IV, p. 1202) He immediately corrects this confession adding that unlike the romantics "...lo común es que me haga reír ver llorar a las mujeres." (IV, p. 1202)

Jardiel had very little faith in his fellow man, and did not believe in the integral goodness of the human race

and placed women at the very bottom of the scale. He stated: "Los hombres somos unos bichos tan despreciables, que era muy difícil crear otro bicho tan despreciable como nosotros, por lo cual, el Supremo Hacedor, con ser el Supremo Hacedor, tardó nada menos que siete días en crear a la mujer." (IV, p. 1206) When women are assigned such a low rank, it follows that love too would fare badly. Love is a word rarely used by Jardiel Poncela and it seldom appears with serious implications in any of his works. When it does, it is rendered as a "dirty" expression and, as he hastens to state, "...siempre he huido de pronunciar palabras soeces." (IV, p. 1207)

Jardiel's first erotic awakening came very early. In the Prólogo of his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache (1928) in which he recalls experiences of the second school he attended, the Sociedad Francesa, Jardiel jokingly states that it was there "...[que] me enamoré la primera vez." (IV, p. 1197) There are no additional references to other early love affairs until 1918, the year he began his long and unsuccessful search for the ideal woman, "la mujer interior." By the time Amor se escribe sin hache was published, in 1928, Jardiel had been involved with three women. The first serious relationship came in 1918, with a "muchacha encantadora"

and lasted seven years. Very little is known about this love affair and, insofar as it has been possible to determine, none of the female characters in his works seem to derive from experiences with this woman. His second serious involvement came in 1925. The experiences of this love affair were to result in the creation of Jardiel's first heroine, Sylvia Brums, in Amor se escribe sin hache. The third experience was with Josefina, to whom he dedicated his first major work and who gave him his first daughter, Evangelina.

The fact that Jardiel, on several occasions, tried to halt his growing reputation for misogyny by justifying the antifeminist tone of his works, stands as proof that his handling of female characters was the subject of some controversy during his life. Because of the comic nature of most of his works, it is pertinent to ask the question: should Jardiel's attacks on women be discounted completely because they spring from a particular comic situation or a particular comic character? Or, should we take them seriously, that is, as evidence of hostility toward women? It is true that, at times, an author is more concerned in bringing to ridicule a vice found in a particular female character rather than in women in general. It is also true that frequently an author's criticism may be so

superficial that it does not cast serious doubts on the general respect that he shows for women; but in the case of Jardiel Poncela, these jibes at female characters are very consistent with the general negativism toward women reflected in his autobiographical sketches, and are therefore very significant. Psychoanalysis demonstrates, for example, that jokes are often indirect means of expressing something which, for some reason or another, cannot be expressed directly.<sup>27</sup> Just as Freud demonstrated that obscene wit is often a substitute for overt sexual activity, hostile wit in literature can be interpreted as a substitute for more overt manifestations of hostility. Antifeminism, even in a patriarchal society such as that of Spain, is an unusual attitude in the twentieth century as opposed to other periods. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jardiel Poncela chose to conceal his antifeminist attitudes masterfully and behind the veil of his most prized literary tool--humor.

Antifeminism, then, can appear and indeed does appear

<sup>27</sup> Literature on antifeminism and misogyny is so vast that no summary of sensible proportion is available. The best reference on this subject is Katahrine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).

in disguised form. At times it is displaced so that a man who feels guilty because of his hatred toward his wife or his mother transfers this hatred toward a prostitute--a character worthy of vilification. At other times antifeminism is projected so that a man who exploits women will insist that it is they who are exploitative and therefore incapable of love. At times it is rationalized, and a man who keeps women under subjection insists that he does so only because of their need to be protected because of their weakness. Finally, at times it is handled with humoristic undertones, and this is the case in many of Jardiel Poncela's works in which his male characters claim that they are only joking when they say that suffering is the usual condition of married men. Such jokes about one's wife, though not necessarily indicative of hatred against women, do indeed show hostility and can only be interpreted as antifeminism. The justification that Jardiel supplies as reason for portraying all of his female characters with negative characteristics is that, despite his long search and his numerous love experiences, he has not been able to find what he refers to as the ideal woman, "la mujer interior." But for Jardiel the ideal woman is the one who is willing to prostitute herself to the man because, as he states, "...una mujer que



no se acomoda a nosotros tiene menos valor que un lava-frutas." Later on toward the end of his life, however, he was to affirm: "Deseo y quiero, desde la adolescencia, a una mujer previamente forjada con arreglo a las exigencias de mi naturaleza; diría que a una mujer perfecta si no fuera porque esa mujer forjada y deseada no reúne exactamente las cualidades que corrientemente se entienden por perfección, sino otras que--en todo caso--constituyen la perfección desde mi punto de vista." (OI, p. 29) Jardiel Poncela conceived this "mujer interior" or "mujer perfecta" as a woman endowed with 100 percent beauty, 100 percent intelligence, and 100 percent sexuality. Jardiel also refers to this woman as "la mujer cúbica" since she is of "...igual anchura, igual altura, e igual profundidad." (OI, p. 30) This picture or concept of woman by Jardiel is not, to say the least, the same as the ideal woman described above. To be sure, if we are to take his remarks about the "mujer cúbica" seriously, then we must question the sincerity of the other statement regarding the ideal woman. How can one seek perfection in a woman who is beautiful, intelligent, and sexual, while at the same time it is insisted that she--the ideal woman--must prostitute herself to man. This obvious ambivalence and others in his statements

with respect to his feelings toward the opposite sex are an indication of the consciousness of his antifeminist tendencies which he sought to mask by asserting that his desire for the ideal woman possessing the necessary prerequisites, the "mujer cúbica" had forced him into a fruitless search and into an endless wandering into the arms of one woman after another. But because of the inability to find the ideal woman, and because of his own unwillingness to compromise, each of his experiences resulted in renunciation.

More representative of Jardiel's true feelings are those statements which, though cleverly masked by "pinceladas humorísticas," reveal a true insight into his character. If only the "ideal woman" is acceptable to Jardiel because, as he states, this woman "...ilumina nuestra existencia y la simplifica y la allana," (IV, p. 1210) he realizes that, as far as he is concerned, only the "real woman" is within his reach: "...pero la mujer real, que nos obscurece, y la complica [la existencia] y la llena de obstáculos, únicamente merece que la tiremos por el hueco del ascensor." (IV, p. 1210) At times, his bitter antifeminism compels him to deny even those attributes that have long been associated with womanhood, such as tenderness, peace, comprehension, sweetness, and

patience: "Sólo en un aspecto es la mujer inferior al hombre. En el aspecto de que, estando en la obligación de personificar la ternura, la paz, la comprensión, la dulzura, la paciencia; estando en el deber de alegrarle y facilitarle la vida al hombre, se esfuerza en hacer todo lo contrario. (Y a causa de esto, es digna de las censuras más agrias." (IV, p. 1210) There are two words in the above statement that merit close scrutiny and which perhaps will aid us in understanding the character of Jardiel. He states that women have the obligation to personify all of the attributes described and, furthermore, that they have the duty to make life easy for men. This is to say that only women must exhibit this obligation and duty toward men, and that men are merely the passive receivers without obligation or duty to display the same attributes toward their female companions. Indeed, we find many references by Jardiel which attest precisely to the attitude described. A few will suffice to clearly illustrate this point. The dedication of his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache, to a certain "Nez-en-l'air" whom we have previously identify as Josefina, the mother of his first daughter, Evangelina, reads as follows: "A la maravillosa y exquisita "Nez-en-l'air" cuyo perfume pre-dilecto compré muchas veces para poder recordar en la

ausencia sus ojos melancólicos. En recompensa a cuanto la hice sufrir..." (IV, p. 1189) Certainly, one cannot fail to notice lack of true affection in the dedication. Apart from the more obvious nickname with all of its implications, indeed such expressions as "para poder recordar en la ausencia sus ojos melancólicos" and "como recuerdo de los años felices en que vimos amanecer juntos" can only lead the observant reader to interpret this relationship as a purely sexual and comfortable relationship since his remembrances only point to physical things.

Another example of what must be regarded as selfishness is found in his essay, Misterio femenino, published in his Obra Inédita. Here, having confessed that he loved many women, he summarizes that "...esas mujeres fueron todas hermosas, porque esa es y ha sido mi condición previa, y distinguidas y elegantes, porque así las hacía el ambiente en que se movían y triunfaban. Por último--y esto es lo más ruborizante de decir, pero no hay más remedio--,todas ellas demostraron quererme cuanto las mujeres son capaces de querer, que es mucho, y a todas ellas abandoné cuando su amor estaba en el apogeo." (OI, p. 29) It is hard to assess the sincerity of these remarks because, as we have stated earlier, we lack the necessary details to identify the women with whom Jardiel

claims he was involved. Despite the lack of details, however, we can again recognize an intense physical concern which characterizes most of his observations regarding the opposite sex. Should one wonder, therefore, when he confesses: "...nunca he sido feliz en amor." (OI, p. 29)

Remarking about his sentimental life, Jardiel confesses that he had never found happiness in love. He claims that he was gifted with an unusual charm and that he always exercised "...una decisiva atracción personal sobre las mujeres." (OI, p. 20) For this reason, he states, he had many romantic relationships with many women from all walks of life, in spite of the fact that, according to his own admission, his physical appearance was all but influential: "Soy feo, singularmente feo, feo elevado al cubo. Además, soy bajo: un metro sesenta de altura...y con esas dos primeras declaraciones, me supongo ya fuera del alcance de las lectoras apasionadas." (IV, p. 1200) It is unlikely that Jardiel's charm with the opposite sex can be attributed to the environment of his profession as he seemed to suggest. It is true that as involved as he often was in theater and film productions, he came in constant and close contact with producers, impresarios, actors and actresses, particularly since he

traveled extensively, both in Europe and in the Americas. Jardiel claims that his great charm with women accounted for relationships with many of them, but that he was never able to find happiness in any of these associations because none of these women conformed to his concept of the ideal woman. Yet the physical portrait he left of himself is all but self-flattering and certainly it is not the portrait of a man who could easily exercise charm over women. If his observations concerning his numerous love affairs are to be taken seriously, and his four illegitimate children with four different women are certainly proof of this, then we must assume that he really did not believe that his physical appearance was a hindrance to him. On the contrary, far from considering himself "...fuera del alcance de las lectoras apasionadas..." he appealed to women's natural maternal instinct. Indeed Jardiel explored this possibility when he stated: "...mi pequeñez física, pues aunque es una verdad que a la mujer le subyuga la gran talla y la arrogante postura del hombre, no es menos cierto-- y doy fe de ello--que 'ellas' llevan dentro el ansia de proteger y se sienten empujadas hacia el que creen débil, acaso por un poso considerable de amor maternal, nunca extinto en la hembra..." (OI, pp. 28-29) In his remarks on his physical appearance and in his supposed charm over

women it is possible to detect symptoms of inferiority complex which, due to his unappealing physical presence, resulted in an irresistible urge to destroy the female sex. In spite of his frequent attacks on the legendary figure of Don Juan, particularly in the Prólogo to his novel Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? in which the label of "cretinismo" is affixed on Don Juan and on those who imitate him, Jardiel is notably boastful in his "confessions" and displays, indeed, all of the manifestations of "donjuanismo." In one of these confessions he states: "...poseído de mi insignificancia física, convencido de que para las mujeres no hay mérito mejor que tener las piernas largas o la nariz grande, está por la primera vez que yo me haya dirigido a una de ellas. Y han sido ellas, siempre y en todos los casos, las que se han dirigido a mí." (IV, pp. 1208-1209) Indirectly, Jardiel seems to say that he was deeply suspicious of women and that he tried to avoid establishing a meaningful relationship with them for fear of possible consequences. The avoidance of women out of fear is very common among anti-feminist writers, and this avoidance is often due to the conviction that women are responsible for bringing misery to men.

As was seen earlier in this chapter, the experience

with Josefina during the years 1926 through 1929 resulted in the birth of the first of four children he was to have fathered in his search for the "mujer interior." This experience, by far, appears to be the most meaningful of all aside from the fact that out of this illicit union was born Evangelina. We know very little about this union which lasted three years; what we know is derived from Jardiel's own writings. Josefina was already married and had one son by her husband, from whom she was separated. The three years Jardiel and Josefina shared together must have been trying years for both of them. There were the ever present arguments due mainly to the financial instability of Jardiel; and at one point, in 1927, Jardiel was determined to end their relationship. It was only due to an unexpected increase in royalties from songs and short newspaper articles that Josefina and Jardiel were able to extend their affair two more years. Here again one must be aware of the fact that Jardiel reached the decision to part without the slightest hesitation, basing his decision on financial instability. If there had been love, as he claims there was, it is not likely that the matter of their separation would even have been considered. When their relationship ended in 1929, Jardiel had already begun writing Amor se escribe sin hache, the heroine of



which, Sylvia Brums, embodies some of the characteristics of Josefina.

His next love affair came shortly afterwards during the same year with a well known Mexican actress, "...[una] figura teatral conocida entonces y mujer del máximo éxito en Madrid de 1929." (OI, p. 33) This same woman was to inspire the character of Palmera Suaretti in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Although never mentioned by name, we have a rather superficial portrait of this woman in the prologue to this novel. Referring to women as "fuerzas ciegas de la naturaleza como los volcanes, las tormentas o las cataratas" (IV, p. 12) who have the power to affect us but who are at the same time unaware of it, Jardiel unconsciously describes his experience with the Mexican actress. He compares her with rheumatic fever, which comes unexpectedly, bringing suffering and forcing one to think about it. In one respect she was different, because, in addition to cause concern, she left behind "algo imborrable." As he states, "...unas veces dejan las mujeres la obra literaria que han inspirado. Otras veces dejan una cuenta del modisto. Y, con frecuencia, las dos cosas." (IV, p. 12) This remark is an obvious indication of the fact that the Mexican actress had inspired him to write ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! and that she left

him with unpaid bills. This relationship, as one might suspect, ended quickly. He felt that the continuation of his liaison with her would have resulted perhaps in deeper emotional involvement, a state he absolutely rejected on the basis that: "...una mujer nos sugerirá una obra; pero esa misma mujer nos impedirá realizarla... en el caso de que ella siga amándonos a nosotros y nosotros sigamos amándola a ella." (IV, p. 13) Again it is possible to see here obvious contradiction in his statements concerning women. He had said earlier that his life was directed toward two goals: literature and women; and that both of these goals were equally important to his happiness. He defined the woman he sought as a "mujer interior." Are we to assume then that, upon finding this "mujer interior" and upon offering his love to her, this would have meant the end of his literary career? It is doubtful that any sensible reader would believe Jardiel's remarks; rather he should interpret them for what they really are: the expression of antifeminist tendencies, and a conscious attempt to mask them by rationalizing his feelings. When Palmera Suaretti did not measure up to the concept of his ideal woman--"la mujer interior"--"el Jardiel Poncela interior, tiránico e implacable" showed no hesitation in renouncing her and, almost simultaneously, in engaging

in another affair with the Mexican actress' best friend. As one might suspect, there were frictions and scandals which eventually cost the two women their friendship. We shall meet this woman in Vivola Adamant in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? and an analysis of her character will appear in Chapter III of this study.

The next experience again with another actress is perhaps the most significant up to 1931. Even newspapers in Madrid began circulating rumors about a possible marriage. This woman, who, Jardiel admits, almost became his wife, is undoubtedly embodied in the character of Flora, one of the heroines of Margarita, Armando y su padre, staged in 1931, a play in which very significant marital arguments play an important role. A detailed study encountered in this play shall appear in Chapter IV of this study; for now, it will suffice to point out that, as was the case with Josefina, financial considerations seemed to have played an important role in this relationship. Flora, for whom love of material things is above her love for her husband, resorts to prostitution in order not to deny herself the material comforts of life.

Another child was born toward the end of 1931 as a result of Jardiel's next love affair; when the relationship ended, the mother took the child back to Cataluña and very

little is known of him. The involvement with this woman must have produced a radical change in the writer's life as reflected in La "tournee" de Dios, published in 1932. This novel, as the title implies, has often been cited for its disrespectful tone toward religion and God. Although this accusation appears to be basically false, the novel reflects the results of many years of bitterness and unfavorable experiences which might have produced negative changes not only in Jardiel the writer, but also--and this might explain its anti-religious tone--in Jardiel the man. This year 1932 was crucial for Jardiel. At 31, his ideas and thoughts as a writer began to mature and to take a definite shape; La "tournee" de Dios is the work which best reflects this change; and without doubt, it is his most profound work. However, Jardiel still persisted in his search for the "mujer interior"--a search which was to continue to be his senseless crusade until his death. In La "tournee" de Dios Jardiel might have finally found peace with himself thus enabling him to display a mellowing attitude toward women; but there are many instances when the old Jardiel emerges with familiar anti-feminist attacks masked by the usual humoristic touches; however, they are not as intensive and as destructive as they had been previously. Even the characters did not

present any new and shocking antifeminist tendencies; rather they presented a summary of what we had already encountered in other works. By the same token, the heroine, Natalia Lorzain, though reflecting traits of the Catalonian woman, was conceived and created "...con 'elementos' de varias mujeres del pasado." (OI, p. 34)

The reader senses an almost desperate attempt by Jardiel to finally close the parenthesis opened back in 1918 by summarizing as a way of conclusion his various failures of the past. The news that he had been contracted by the film company Twentieth Century Fox of Hollywood to write dialogues for American-made films in the Spanish language might have also contributed to this change. This news came at a time when he least expected it, and he welcomed the opportunity to leave Spain and gladly accepted the new challenge. But before leaving for the United States in September of 1932, Jardiel was involved with another woman--the one who was to bear his third child. He described her as follows: "[Era] una muchacha dulce, suave, llena de delicadezas y de mansedumbre. Cuando en la estación, al pie del sudexpreso, me despedía, llorando, ya llevaba en las entrañas el germen de mi tercer hijo: una niña...pero tampoco la madre era los tres 100 x 100..." (OI, p. 34)

There are no records of his love affairs in the United States during the latter part of 1932 and throughout 1933. Perhaps the unfamiliar surroundings coupled with the language barrier and the relative short time he was there prevented the development of any really serious relationships. However, when he returned to the United States in 1934 there is a record of a serious involvement with a Mexican woman who gave birth to his fourth and last child. Regarding this child--a boy--we are told that she "...se [lo] llevó antes de nacer, despechada." Jardiel explains that this was done "...para que mi hijo naciese ciudadano mexicano...y para que yo no volviera a verle más que en fotografía." (OI, p. 35)

A number of engagement, promises, and renunciations--all neither more nor less fortunate than the others--followed that affair in the United States. Some of the most relevant are the following: in 1935 he had an affair in Hollywood with a woman who was to suggest to Jardiel the character of Coral in his play Las cinco advertencias de Satanás; also in 1935, he had an affair in Nice where he had been contracted by Fox in connection with Celuloides rancios.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> This project consisted in converting old silent films, for the most part forgotten, into sound motion pictures with Spanish dialogues.

This experience resulted in the inspiration of two plays, Carlo Monte en Monte Carlo and Eloisa está debajo de un almendro with their heroines Valentina and Mariana reflecting traits of this woman. Certain elements of Mariana's character are also derived from experiences he had with another woman during a brief stay in San Sebastian in 1938. Upon his return to Madrid in 1940, Jardiel had another unfortunate affair which resulted in the creation of Blanca, the violent woman of Blanca por fuera y Rosa por dentro and the heroine of Las siete vidas del gato. The year 1942 was a unique year for Jardiel. A simultaneous affair with two women, two cousins, suggested to him the comedy Tú y yo somos tres, one of his most humorous plays.

The women and experiences which followed during the years 1943 to 1945 did not contribute appreciably to his literary output. Their relevance is important only if one adds them to the already long list of failures experienced during his life.

The futile search for "la mujer cúbica" or "mujer interior" with all the resultant frustrations and bitterness experienced with seemingly all of them, must have had a lasting impact on Jardiel and must have been unquestionably one of the major causes underlining the vicious attacks

on women so frequently found in his plays and in his novels. Certainly Jardiel would not subscribe to this; he would even refuse to concede to the antifeminist tone of his writings. He would feel that one must distinguish between contempt and rage. How could he feel contempt, he asserts, for those who had given him the best of their souls and of their bodies? Perhaps rage, yes, since not a single one had ever come close to the concept of the woman he sought--"la mujer interior" or "la mujer cúbica." Our author was well aware that this woman did not exist. In the following statement, he seems to blame himself for his inability to find the ideal woman. He says: "...la clave de mi vida amorosa, la trágica e inverosímil clave de mi vida amorosa, podría enunciarse diciendo: que las mujeres me han producido los goces y yo me he producido el sufrimiento." (OI, p. 38)

Jardiel felt that his novels, more than any other writings, were the vehicle through which he expressed his hostility toward women and that his theater was free from this tendency. One is compelled, however, to take issue with him regarding this view. We might feel less inclined to criticize him for his attacks on women as they occur in his comedies rather than in his novels, but



it is also true that the level of intensity is higher in his novels, not because of any conscious effort on his part to appear more impartial; rather, the use of the comic element as well as the very nature of the theatrical genre tend to mask his feelings and prejudices toward women to a much greater extent than in his novels. Not one single comedy of those analyzed for the purpose of this study fails to reveal frequent attacks on women, on love, and on the institution of marriage. If a reader approaches the comedies with the idea and purpose of establishing Jardiel's feelings on these three perennial problems, it is not difficult at all to question the sincerity of the author when he refuses to admit the intensity with which he attacks the female characters. Of all the feminine characters appearing in his comedies, not a single one is treated on an equal level with her male counterpart.

It is understandable for a reader who cannot avoid sensing Jardiel's deep antagonism for women to ask himself whether this attitude was the result of the many unhappy love experiences, or whether it was caused by a relationship with a particular woman. Jardiel himself must have anticipated the readers' reactions to his handling of women and attempted to answer by stating:

"...nunca hubo herida abierta en mí por ninguna mujer."  
(OI, p. 38) It is impossible for us to evaluate how large and how deep a wound must be to leave a scar on someone. If we accept the premise that one of the most important things in the life of a writer, particularly a writer like Jardiel Poncela whose livelihood during those difficult times in Spain depended entirely on how much he produced, then we must regard as rather unusual the fact that he was unfruitful in his literary endeavors for approximately four years. Yet this is precisely the case, as he confessed it in a letter he wrote to Ramón Gómez de la Serna in 1949 explaining that a woman was the cause of his literary and physical decline:

En estos cuatro años y pico la vida mía sólo ha sido mi sufrimiento desarrollándose día a día como una bobina de papel continuo. Ya ahí en Buenos Aires, había comenzado, a poco de llegar, ese sufrimiento. La causa ya la supondrá: una mujer...No quise hablarle entonces de eso, ni le hablaré nunca, porque usted sabe ya todas las réplicas de uno y otro interlocutor en esa clase de diálogos. ¿Y para qué hablar de lo que está hablado en el primer albor humano? Hoy, ahora, aludo a este asunto como aclaración a mi silencio epistolar de los cuatro años transcurridos, pues--ya lo sabe usted también--esos sufrimientos morales son la razón de todas las pérdidas de salud; y yo a lo largo de esos cuatro años he sido un enfermo constante...<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Retratos completos (Madrid: Aguilar, 1961), p. 1166

The fact that Jardiel Poncela's novels and comedies always contain some female villains to hold up to ridicule, censure, or furious indignation can only indicate one thing, namely, the continuation of the perennial desire to express hostility toward women, a tradition which, as we saw, found its beginning with the first monument of Spanish literature and continued, uninterrupted, down to the twentieth century. Jardiel, through the portrayal of the many female characters endowed with hateful elements, sought only to provide a morally justified outlet for expression of his antifeminist feelings. Because the manifestation of such an attitude is generally interpreted as an abnormal one, some authors repudiate it outright, while others tend to disguise it. This is accomplished in a number of ways: the author might attack an admittedly hateful type--a prostitute, an adulteress, etc.; he might satirize certain shortcomings in women, such as their vanity or their coquettishness; he might resort to the perennial question of the moral and intellectual inferiority of women; or, finally, he might employ humoristic techniques while ridiculing love and the institution of marriage. In Jardiel's case, this disguise is given away by the frequency and by the intensity of his attacks on women as well as by the satiric

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nature of these attacks. It is also betrayed by his lack of distinction between women who can be justifiably censured and women in general, as well as by undercurrents of seriousness in the comic way he treats his female characters.

Certainly, in view of the general financial dependence of women during this period, certain negative attitudes toward them might be understandable and, in extreme cases, even justified. We saw, for example, how this financial dependence was the key factor in the relationship of Jardiel and Josefina and, later on, how it influenced his relationship with another woman.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, when two people live together, it is not unusual to find conflicts of interest and frequent squabbles; but because we know these facts only through Jardiel and never through his women, it is difficult to assess the validity of his censures. Without doubt, the answer to his bitterness lies not only in the weakness of the women but also in the self-centeredness of the writer. Freud stated that the male, more than the female, is inclined to

<sup>30</sup> In his comedy, Margarita, Armando y su padre, Flora complains to her husband about her financial dependence on him. This leads to Jardiel's concept of women as exploitative, valuing men only as sources of income.

overridealize his love object and that such idealization leads to disillusionment. Jardiel's search for the ideal woman, "la mujer interior," and the consequences resulting from not being able to satisfy this desire is but one example. Also, the fact that what Jardiel Poncela wrote about women is generally negative does not mean necessarily that he was moved by hatred. He might have been compelled to write in this fashion by his desire to capitalize on the perennial subject of whether the place of women is to be the home or whether they should be engaged in a competition with their male counterparts.

Perhaps the most persistent antifeminist attack by Jardiel is the charge that women are responsible for men's misery, and consequently, for their own misery. So we see in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! that Palmera Suaretti, the heroine, causes "el Marqués" to involve himself in criminal activities and that, toward the end of the novel, Mario, who had successfully dodged all previous attempts to assassinate him, dies as a result of falling down the stairs leading to Palmera's apartment. Following Mario's death, Palmera also returns to her original insignificance by "selling" herself to the "Marqués."

Jardiel made recurrent charges in his works that a woman is incapable of loving, and that her affection for

a man is measured only in terms of how much money she can obtain from him.<sup>31</sup> If viewed strictly from a cultural background, these attacks might be partially justified and, as Katharine Rogers maintains, some manifestation of hostility toward women might be considered as a purely social phenomenon and not necessarily the direct result of an individual's attitude. She states:

Naturally a man's attitudes are affected by his culture, so that an orthodox Christian will be very aware of the Fall, a Puritan convinced of the righteousness of Pauline subjection of women, a contemporary writer alert to the baneful effects of possessive motherhood. Furthermore, convention has played an important part in writing about women, both for and against. It was expected that a Renaissance lyric poet would write a sonnet sequence and include a few hostile poems in it. We must distinguish between cultural and individual attitudes.<sup>32</sup>

One of the leading and most obvious causes of anti-feminism is sexual guilt, which eventually transforms itself into an obsessive concern with lust--the attitude that sexual relations are degrading to the man, and the impulse to rebel against the dependence on women for

<sup>31</sup> A view on this subject appears in his play, El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros.

<sup>32</sup> Katharine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 268-269.

sexual pleasures. It is possible to see some of this concern in the writings of Jardiel Poncela, although it must be made clear that in spite of what Eugenio G. de Nora maintains, Jardiel Poncela is not a misogynyst. At first, because of his more severe censures against women, it is possible to form an erroneous impression about the nature of his writings and, to a certain extent, even to consider him a misogynyst: "Hace años se me antojaba una monstruosidad el que la Iglesia hubiera vivido siglos enteros sin reconocer la existencia del alma femenina. En la actualidad, opino que la Iglesia tenía razón y que reconoció la existencia del alma en la mujer demasiado pronto." (IV, p. 1209) Jardiel Poncela could not have produced as much as he did without the companionship of women, however temporary and stormy these relationships might have been. Seeking to reassure the reader who undoubtedly would misinterpret his remarks as an expression of misogyny, he affirms that "...sin la compañía, sin la presencia de las mujeres no podría vivir; me gustan por encima de la salvación de mi alma. Lo que hago, al menos por ahora, es no entregarles el corazón..." (IV, pp. 1210-1211) In spite of this, however, he often boasted of the fact that "...nunca me he dirigido a ninguna mujer, porque a la mujer, como al

cocodrilo, hay que cazarla y la caza es un deporte que no me interesa..." (IV, pp. 1209-1210) Unlike other antifeminist writers who exonerated man from any responsibility, Jardiel feels that man is to be blamed at least partially for some negative weaknesses he finds in women. He states: "El hombre ofuscado y cegado por la belleza femenina ha exaltado a la mujer sin pararse a considerar su imperdonable conducta en la vida. Ha sido, pues, el hombre el principal culpable de que sea la mujer como es, y aun de estropearla todavía más; pues a fuerza de elogiarla, de considerarla como el eje del mundo y de rendir su cerebro ante sus pantorrillas, ha obtenido el triste resultado de que cualquier estupidilla, sin otro bagaje que unos ojos bonitos, se crea superior a cuanto la rodea." (IV, p. 1210)

According to psychoanalytical theories, sexual guilt is generally the underlying factor responsible for the expression of antifeminism, and it is closely associated with early childhood experiences with domineering parents, especially with mothers. From statements made by Jardiel Poncela in his autobiographical sketches, we are able to determine that his parents, particularly his mother, demanded an excessive participation in intellectual and artistic activities which prevented him from taking part



in other interests. He states: "Mi vida infantil se desarrolló en un medio esencialmente artístico e intelectual, y en fuerza de convivir con la intelectualidad y con el arte, he aprendido a no concederles importancia."

(IV, p. 1195) Within this intellectual and artistic environment his mother exercised a vital influence.

Recollecting on this influence, he states: "La sombra azulada de mi madre se extendió sobre mi infancia inculcándome el buen gusto, la delicadeza y la melancolía...

A los siete [años] de la mano materna, recorría las salas del Museo del Prado y sabía distinguir de una ojeada a Rubens de Teniers y al Greco de Ribera." (IV, p. 1196)

If these remarks had been written upon the death of his mother, very little importance would have been attributed to them. The fact that these words came eleven years after her death and, consequently, well into the period of his search for "la mujer interior" is something which cannot be overlooked and which merits more than a simple matter-of-fact acknowledgement. The assertion that his mother was responsible for instilling in him a feeling of melancholy is more than a casual or even tender reference to his mother. A melancholic state is a sad and morbid attitude, resulting in a dejected and depressed view toward life. Although no direct reference exists to tie

his antagonism for women to the relationship with his mother, there are references in his works of attacks on motherhood which might justify pointing toward that direction.<sup>33</sup> The strongest evidence pointing to the possible damaging effects of the son-mother relationship is to be found in the following poem written by Jardiel about his mother thirty one years after her death:

#### FANTASMAS DEL PASADO

"Se muere"--dijo el médico al trasponer la puerta.  
 Pero ella estaba muerta  
 desde hacía ya tiempo: por lo menos un mes.  
 Calor de fin de julio. Venía de la huerta  
 un perfume de fruta y el rumor de la miés.  
 Mil novecientos diecisiete en un pueblito aragonés.  
 ¡Qué lejana la fecha! ¡Treinta y un años ya!  
 ¡Cuántas cosas--pasando--  
 se han ido amontonando  
 sobre la noche en que...! Ah, ¡la pobre mamá!  
 El pueblo por el pueblo va en puntillas andando  
 detrás de aquel tañir de aquella campanilla.  
 Y las gentes de casa les esperan, hincando,  
 en el zaguán de piedra la cansada rodilla.  
 Y por fin, el tañir juvenil y simpático,  
 que es el adelantado de un misterio fecundo  
 resuena en el zaguán y por allí entra el Viático,  
 y sólo yo le veo pasar, pues todo el mundo  
 inclina ahora el semblante humillado y contrito  
 sin ver más que las filas de losas de granito...

Inacabado. 1948 (OI, pp. 343-344)

<sup>33</sup> Such is the case of Patricia Barret, mother of Annie in El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros, whose relationship with her daughter can only be measured in terms of how much money is she able to receive from her daughter and from her husband.

What one notices immediately in the title of this poem is the word "fantasmas" with all of its hidden implications. A "fantasma" among other meanings, is an illusion; it is also a delusion, a falsehood; it is something real that haunts the soul. Aside from these undercurrents implied by its title, the poem contains what must be considered a surprising attitude on the part of Jardiel toward his mother. When the mood of the poem should be somber, as indeed it is for "el pueblo" which shows its respect "hincando en el zaguán de piedra la cansada rodilla," Jardiel seems to direct his attention toward something other than the sombering fact of his mother's funeral, preferring instead to underline the importance of those adjectives--"juvenil" and "simpático"--hardly appropriate for the occasion. What this mood seems to indicate is that far from a tender recollection of his mother we are confronted with a re-evaluation of his feelings, in a sort, which is indeed suggestive of some resentment. The affection and the tenderness which underlined the relationship with his mother during the formative years of his life, and the subsequent transformation of these feelings into resentment might possibly be construed as a form of the Freudian Oedipus complex. The boy's first erotic object, according to this principle, is his mother.

Because of the rejection of these feelings in favor of the father, the boy comes to view his mother as a faithless woman, unresponsive to his love. This feeling is not temporary but persists throughout the boy's existence unless this complex is completely understood and solved. In some cases this bitterness is apt to remain attached to the mother, but more than likely it is transferred to other women since the boy-mother relationship is the prototype for all of his future relationships with women. Indeed, a lightly comical but nevertheless valid reference is made by Jardiel on this subject which would indicate that he had considered the problem of hostility toward women in light of Freudian explanations. This occurred toward the latter part of Jardiel's life, after consulting a doctor--in all probability a psychoanalyst--concerning his mental depressions. He recollected this experience with these words:

Resultó que por haberse detenido mi crecimiento en la edad crítica (el médico calcula que hacia 1918), yo tengo una superdotación de los elementos cerebelosos y raquídeos, y resulta que en el parecer del médico, eso lo explica todo: mi "mujer interior" (en la que hay un complejo de Edipo); el atractivo ejercido sobre las mujeres (que no obedecía a razón alguna de las imaginadas por mí); mi inquietud e inestabilidad sexual (ese de ir de unos brazos a otros, impulsado por el "yo" tiránico y eternamente insatisfecho); mis renunciadas a mujeres (que un

hombre normal no habría renunciado); y mis sufrimientos de toda índole, hasta llegar, por fin, al ápice de los más recientes. (OI, p. 45)

In the context of a possible explanation of his hostility toward the other sex, the above passage is particularly illuminating. Jardiel's conclusion that "un hombre normal" would not have acted in the same fashion with regard to his frequent but necessary renunciations can only be interpreted as an awareness on his part, at least in the area of female relationships, that he did not act as a normal man. Also, in spite of what seems to be a clear understanding of his problem, Jardiel confessed that "...el ciclo abierto en 1918 no se ha cerrado aun." (OI, p. 45)

Another possible reason for Jardiel's antifeminist tendency is the patriarchal feelings which he, as an individual, might have nourished as a result of social and cultural circumstances. That is, those who enjoy the position on the top wish to remain on the top. The fact that men, even at the present time when so many women justly demand equal rights, would rather make most of the household decisions themselves is not unusual. Also, most men would rather not be in a position of having to compete with women in their profession. Katharine M. Rogers, in

an attempt to explain the reasons for patriarchal feelings, states that the motives are too selfish to be readily admitted and that, as a result of this, they must be necessarily justified by a form of rationalization.<sup>34</sup> For a while it was rationalized under the myth of the Fall of Adam. For St. Paul and for many preachers of the medieval, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was generally sufficient to justify their negative view of women on the basis that God had placed them in subjection for their leading role in the Fall from Paradise. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the position of many antifeminist writers and thinkers was rationalized by their ideas that women had, by nature, serious limitations such as their weakness, their timidity, their incapacity for reasoning, their insensitivity to abstract ideas and finally their lack of judgment and responsibility. This served to set up a vicious circle: the story of the Fall served to justify the subordinate position of women in Jewish society and, later on, in Christian society as well. Because of their frailty, women are placed under the subjection of men not only by custom but also by law, and could not enjoy equal status with men.

<sup>34</sup> Katharine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 272.

There is ample justification to view the attitude of Jardiel Poncela toward women also from a patriarchal aspect, mainly in the form of subordination of female characters found in his novels and plays to their male counterparts. For instance, Pedro Esfarcíes, the male protagonist of Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? insists that his women be unquestionably and absolutely obedient to him; the lack of complete loyalty often results in the loss of their privileges and, eventually, in their expulsion from his "harem." The aspect of professional competition between husband and wife and its consequent negative results is amply covered and demonstrated in his play, El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros, in which a tremendous friction is felt between husband and wife that eventually results in the dissolution of their marriage. In his works, as well as in his autobiographical sketches, Jardiel revealed a deep fear that women, if allowed to free themselves from their restrictions, would become man's masters. This fear is the root of the insistence on a patriarchal society in keeping women subjected to men, and according to Katharine M. Rogers, "...may be traced ultimately to the mother's power over her son and more directly to the power of the wife or mistress over

her husband and lover."<sup>35</sup> Jardiel, in a very obvious manner, was very sensitive about his power and dominance over women. Indeed, we find countless references indicating his feelings that courting women is both degrading and time-wasting: "...esforzarse por lograr una mujer me parece una pérdida de tiempo semejante a la de darle de comer a una ternera el contenido de una lata de sardinas en aceite." (IV, pp. 1209-1210) The fact that, in spite of this, Jardiel felt the urge to persist in his "hunt" of "la mujer interior" reveals, at least partially, that he needed companionship and that the resentment expressed in the form of antifeminism might be due to his realization of his sexual and psychological dependence on women: "Ese deseo de esa mujer interior, que he buscado en todas las mujeres, que a veces he creído hallar y que no he hallado nunca, me ha hecho rodar de unos brazos a otros, repitiendo inconscientemente el más feroz de todos los esfuerzos, el más brutal de todos los trabajos, el más doloroso movimiento del alma: RENUNCIAR." (OI, p. 30)

Criticism of women--negative criticism--flourished in all periods of Spanish literature and, indeed, in all Western literatures. For the most part this criticism

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 275.



was manifested in and inspired by a deep hostility on the part of men. In the case of Jardiel Poncela, this resentment has been released, for the most part, through "pinceladas humorísticas," an art in which Jardiel was a master. Because of the comic element found in generally all of Jardiel's writings, including those that are autobiographical in nature, the antifeminist tendency of this author may, at times, be underplayed and possibly even ignored, as indeed, this has been the case. One may argue that the writer who expresses the opinion that a woman is mentally different from a man, and that her place should be in the home and not engaging in competition with a man is not necessarily expressing antifeminist tendencies, but merely accepting this assumption from his culture and from his society. Yet, a writer whose consistent insistence on the inferiority of women constitute the trademark of his works is indeed expressing hostility against women and consequently is to be classified as antifeminist.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ANTIFEMINIST ELEMENT IN THE NOVELS OF JARDIEL PONCELA

One of Cervantes' intentions when he wrote Don Quijote was to satirize the "novelas de caballerías" in an effort to deflate the exaggerated importance attributed to this genre and, consequently, to generate interest in a return to reality. Jardiel Poncele's intention in writing his first novel was to facilitate a new interpretation of the question of women in an attempt to re-evaluate the Romantic tendency of overridealizing them, which he felt still persisted. His reinterpretation, however, is all but indicative of a fair treatment of women and, indeed, it has resulted in a new characterization of the female which is, to say the least, diametrically opposed to the Romantic concept and, therefore, as exaggerated as the other. Jardiel Poncele, as it was noted earlier, had definite ideas concerning the theater, and the frequent remarks made on the nature of this genre as well as his numerous contributions denote unmistakably that his inclination as an author was channeled mainly toward the stage. However, he often alluded to the facility with which he could create a novel, a fact that can easily be

proved by examining the period of time during which all of his novels were written and published.<sup>36</sup> The creation of a theatrical work was always a preoccupying problem for Jardiel because he knew that the theater-going public was quite often ignorant of the author's aim and consisted mainly of individuals whose intellectual inclination toward "lo nuevo" and "lo inverosímil" contrasted sharply with his theories. In the novel, however, he saw a two-fold purpose: firstly, creating a novel could satisfy his insatiable urge to write, releasing, therefore, his tension; secondly, his confidence that his novels would be published and widely read, relieved, at least partially, his perennial financial burden. His tremendous and effortless ease with which he could write a novel made this task the most pleasurable aspect of his profession as an author; furthermore, his facility of expression was coupled with his awareness that, unlike the stage, the novel was meant for a limited public who, prior to buying a book, was perfectly cognizant of the message of the author and of the nature of his writings.

<sup>36</sup> With the exception of El plano astral, written in accordance with earlier interests and whose importance to the genre he himself often questioned, Jardiel Poncela wrote the four remaining novels within five years--1928 through 1932.

The recurring aspect of the antifeminist theme in the novels of Jardiel, and the variety of aspects under which this hostility is manifested in each novel would render a separate study of each work repetitious and monotonous; for these reasons, the antifeminist elements present in the first three novels, Amor se escribe sin hache, ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! and Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? have been classified under fourteen distinct categories. An exception has been made in the case of La "tournee" de Dios because this novel, more than any previous ones, reflects the attitude of Jardiel Poncela on the subject of women. Furthermore, the obvious similarity between Federico Orellana who, as principal character, plays the role of a famous humorist author, and the author himself show definite autobiographical traits which merit special consideration.

#### LUSTFUL ASPECT OF WOMEN

In Amor se escribe sin hache, Zambombo, the principal male character, had been exposed to sex four times prior to meeting Sylvia, the heroine. His first experience with a young secretary resulted in her giving herself to him very quietly so that "...el pecado [pareciera] más pecado."

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This brief affair ended when she promised him "amor eterno" and, in utter disgust, Zambombo states, "...se la cedí al dependiente de una guantería..." (IV, p. 1256)<sup>37</sup> The second affair, with a young German girl began when, on the way to his apartment, she saved time by gradually undressing herself stating that "time is money." (IV, p. 1258) With Ramona, the third affair, the experience was more aggressive in nature. Showing the more lustful side of woman, Zambombo relates how "...el 16 de marzo comenzó un idilio que no debía acabar sino cinco semanas después" and which resulted in his renunciation because "...seguir al lado de Ramona era tan perjudicial para mi salud como un espumoso de vitriolo." (IV, p. 1261) In Manolita, the fourth experience, Zambombo found a religious fanatic as well as a voluptuous lover. Expressing a sense of guilt, she would often react after their love making by asking God to forgive her. This affair also ended when Zambombo suggested to her that she should confess her sins prior to coming to see him so that "...confesándote antes te ahorrarías las molestias de vestirte precipitadamente, de retorcerte las manos y de tirarte de los cabellos." (IV, p. 1263)

<sup>37</sup> References to all of Jardiel's works are from his Obras completas, 4 vols (Madrid: Ahr, 1969). To avoid repetition, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses.

During a meeting between Sylvia and Zambombo the author reveals another aspect of lustfulness. Sylvia, who was in the habit of informing her husband, Arencibia, of each new lover, had found herself in the unusual predicament of not having had lovers to report during recent weeks. To save face, she had simply picked Zambombo's name out of the telephone directory because "...una mujer que durante años enteros tiene dos amantes inéditos por semana y que de pronto ve trascurrir catorce días sin renovar las existencias, presenta todas las apariencias de que ha dejado de ser seductora y atractiva." (IV, p. 1282)

A different aspect of lust appears in a situation in France, where Sylvia and Zambombo had gone after the latter's duel with Arencibia. It involved the "victim" of a rape, Alice Forel, who simply did not have the heart to call her parents for help before being raped "...por no interrumpir vuestro sueño." (IV, p. 1356)

While in London, the situation between Sylvia and Zambombo had assumed a proportion of crisis. Zambombo was no longer convinced that Sylvia was not interested in other men and was consistently listening for any rumors which would betray her infidelity. For this reason, when Mr. Stappleton alluded to Sylvia as "...una mujer confortable..." Zambombo prolonged the conversation and

learned that Sylvia was not only one of those creatures "...que cuando ven a un hombre se apresuran a tenerlo en su lecho..." but that, on a more broad scale, "...el único sitio donde Sylvia no ha tenido amantes es en el interior del Vesubio." (IV, p. 1422)

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! the aspect of feminine lust is generously distributed within its chapters. The primary target is, of course, the heroine of the novel, Palmera Suaretti. One of the most sought-after "vedettes" in Spain, Palmera had made it her life ambition to conquer Mario, who was about to marry. Knowing that he had gone out with some friends to celebrate his last night as a bachelor, Palmera waits for him to return home only to find that he is too drunk to even notice her. Not at all disturbed by his condition, Palmera instructs her escort to carry Mario to her apartment where she is determined to obtain from him what he had refused to give her during prior meetings: "¡Oh, amor mío! Me huyes, te me escapabas constantemente, como huye y escapa el palomo de la garra mortal del halcón. Para hacerte mío me veo forzada a tomarte en los momentos en que tu espíritu boga en la polacra de lo inconsciente por las azules ondas de un Mediterráneo sin orillas..." (IV, p. 72) Her obvious inability to performe the sexual act due to Mario's

drunkness reveals the more beastly aspect of lust:

"Palmera gritó, lloró, se arañó el rostro, el pecho y las manos. Y zarandeó de uno a otro lado su cabeza de Medusa hidrófoba, mientras elevaba al cielo dos brazos amenazadores y rectos, dibujando en el aire una inmensa, una blanquísima y griega, y sollozando tremendamente: --¡No puedo! ¡No puedo! ¡Me volveré loca, porque no puedo!... (IV, p. 77) Jardiel's description of Palmera Suaretti is that of a woman with a tremendous and insatiable sexual appetite. She shies away from older men because "...al llegarle a la mujer los momentos de apetito, en lugar de satisfacerse le abren más las ganas de comer..." (IV, p. 31) She compares the love of older men to vermouth and the love of younger men to beef-steaks because "...el bistec y el vermut acaban produciendo por igual la dispepsia; pero, al menos, el bistec sosiega y calma el hambre, mientras que el vermut lo excita y aumenta..." (IV, p. 31)

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? we re-encounter an old and well known figure: Sylvia Brums. When we left her in Amor se escribe sin hache she had deserted Zambombo leaving him on a deserted island. She makes her reappearance in this novel as a rich prostitute and a close friend of Pedro's uncle, Félix. As an



experienced professional, Sylvia Brums had been selected by Félix to introduce Pedro to his first sexual experience, a task to which she would gladly submit herself because, according to Félix, "...a lady Brums gustaba esta clase de platos exquisitos..." (IV, p. 915) Aided by his great charm, Pedro wins the first battle: the battle of words:

Sylvia:--¿Acaso sabe usted dónde está su felicidad?

Pedro:-- (...mirando la parte del cuerpo de Sylvia que desaparecía entre los manteles): Sí. Debajo de la mesa.

Sylvia:--Debajo de la mesa sólo están mis piernas, amiguito; las columnas de mi templo, como si dijéramos...

Pedro:-- Pues bien, lady Sylvia: yo quisiera ser el Sansón que las separase para hacer que "cayera" el templo...(IV, p. 918)

#### UNTRUTHFUL ASPECT OF WOMEN

Although it is obvious that untruthfulness is common in the female characters of Jardiel, it is a weakness which cannot be attributed to Sylvia Brums in this work. To be sure, she engages in innumerable extra-marital love affairs; but she does so with the knowledge of her husband, Arencibia, who informs and reassures each new lover of his permission, blessings and full cooperation. Untruthfulness is an aspect of antifeminism found in the

character of Mignonne Lecoeur, Mr. Lips' traveling companion. Toward the end of the novel we find Mignonne as Arencibia's new mistress, and we learn that she had tricked him into believing she was a poor, innocent girl who had just escaped from school and, as a virgin, was completely inexperienced in matters of love.

Palmera Suaretti in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! is a master of deceitful tactics. Her skill is particularly evident during an episode in which Mario, utterly drunk, is being carried back to his apartment after unsuccessful attempts by Palmera to rape him. The commotion awakes some of the neighbors who, puzzled by the scene, ask if there had been an accident. Displaying unparalleled cynicism, she replies: "El marqués ha coincidido con su hijo en el mismo 'cabaret', y como el muchacho estaba borracho, lo ha traído a su casa. Y mi doncella y yo, que veníamos de misa, nos hemos brindado a ayudar a subirle la escalera..." (IV, p. 85)

Palmera, however, is not the only female character displaying deceitful tactics. When Mario contemplates suicide believing that he is suffering from cancer, he meets Mimí Bazar who explains that she is also trying to kill herself. Mario and Mimí decide to temporarily postpone their suicide and to enjoy each other's company

during the night. Upon awakening the next morning, the only trace of Mimí is a note which reads: "Desconfíe usted de las mujeres que hablan de querer suicidarse. La mujer y el pingüino son seres que no se suicidan nunca. Y desconfíe todavía más de encontrar su cartera: me la llevo yo." (IV, p. 133)

Of all the women appearing in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Maria Cristina de Orellana is by far the least hateful; however, because of her involvement in the plot to assassinate Pedro, she must be included among women of untruthful and conniving nature. For more than a year, Pedro, who knew of her part in the scheme, provided her with ample opportunities to successfully complete her assignment. When he finally confronts her with the truth she surprisingly admits her involvement but confesses: "Vine a matarte, pero te quiero tanto, ¡tanto!...que no he tenido fuerzas para hacerlo." (IV, p. 954) At the end of the novel, however, we are given a different impression of María Cristina. Gambling away the little money left from his vast fortune in a Monte Carlo Casino, Pedro discovers that his challenger is none other than María Cristina who, without batting an eyelash, proceeds to clean him out of his last penny.

# NATURAL INFERIORITY ASPECT OF WOMEN

Zambombo and Arencibia in Amor se escribe sin hache are trying to settle their differences with regard to their views concerning women. Arencibia is determined to impose his ideas on Zambombo that women are naturally inferior to men. He concedes that men, also, are often guilty of vanity and egotism, but they are excused for displaying these tendencies since "...al menos tienen una buena cualidad; sirven para algo: estudian, aran y siembran; fabrican muebles; funden; dictan leyes o las aplican; construyen; detienen borrachos; pescan; telegrafían; conducen trenes; esculpen; barren; hacen moneda, pitos, caballos de cartón, automóviles, grúas y submarinos; cepillan maderas; venden; compran; ponen bombillas; crían cocodrilos, etc..." (IV, p. 1320) Women, on the other hand, do very little toward betterment of mankind, judges Arencibia challenging Zambombo to name one single contribution made by women which would match even superficially that of men. Suspecting that Zambombo would answer: "Hacen niños y niñas" Arencibia remarks that "...el hombre también los hace sin darse tomo por ello; al contrario, a veces, llevado de un impulso de extraordinaria modestia, dice que no son suyos...En definitiva--aparte su misión

reproductora, inherente también al hombre, y descontando casos particularísimos--la mujer no hace nada que compense de sus numerosos defectos." (IV, pp. 1320-1321) In a more peculiar aspect of the natural inferiority of women, Zambombo has now arrived at the conclusion that women have been responsible for all of his misfortunes. His ideas toward love and women have undergone a radical change following Sylvia's desertion. The sufferings experienced during this period resulted in an unparalleled expression of hostility and bitterness toward the female which surpassed even the most extreme views expressed earlier by Arencibia. For this reason, seeking to find a person in a position to sympathize with him, Zambombo returns to Madrid to find Arencibia. His joy in locating him is suddenly shattered when he discovers that Arencibia is not the same man who earlier had attempted to convince him of the futility of seeking happiness in a woman. Arencibia has undergone a change in thought matched only by the change in thought experienced by Zambombo. Arencibia no longer views women as commodities; though he admits the problematic aspect of women, he has now become convinced that these problems can be resolved in the same manner as financial problems. In spite of repeated attempts to calm Zambombo, Arencibia is unable to move him

from the conviction that "...la mujer sigue siendo un insecto ponzoñoso del que hay que huir para que no nos envenene la sangre..." (IV, p. 1471) Granting that his hate is the immediate result of disillusionment, Zambombo notes that Arencibia's new-found love in Mignonne is also the result of an illusion, adding that "...toda reacción es producto de una acción. Si nos apartamos del fuego es porque sabemos que el fuego quema. Y la experiencia no es más que el fruto de la observación ajena y propia..." (IV, p. 1471) Perhaps seeking to justify or to rationalize the extremeness of his thoughts, Zambombo remarks that he, as well as all misogynysts, would certainly be driven by a far different desire if "...la mujer fuera noble, recta, pura, inteligente, discreta, púdica y abnegada." (IV, p. 1471) There can be little doubt that in these qualifications we see the same characteristics which Jardiel sought in his "mujer cúbica" or "mujer interior." The reaction of Zambombo in determining that these attributes cannot be found in any women is remarkably consistent with Jardiel's "renunciación" following each of his love experiences except in one detail: whereas Jardiel maintained the same determination to find "la mujer interior" in spite of the fact that this determination might have been born out of his need to rationalize his

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failures and by his need to mask his true feelings toward women, Zambombo reaches the extreme position by stating that, in creating women, God was very much aware that he was creating inferior beings: "...Dios se daba perfecta cuenta de la clase de tipo que era Eva, y por ello, en su infinita sabiduría y misericordia, obligó al hombre a nacer de mujer y a engendrar hijas: de esta suerte habría por lo menos dos hembras que escaparían al odio del hombre...La idea es digna de Dios. Pero yo pertenezco al grupo de los que ni aun así ceden en su odio." (IV, p. 1471) Knowing the misogynystic nature of Arencibia at the beginning of the novel and noting also that Jardiel might have wanted to convey his antifeminist feelings through this character, an observant reader of Amor se escribe sin hache might justifiably ask whether it is not possible that his subsequent change of view could be interpreted as an indication that one can indeed experience meaningful love with a deserving woman. This position, of course, would be justified if we were not aware of the nature of the woman responsible for the alteration of his feelings. Mignonne, the woman in question, the same woman with whom Zambombo had an affair on a train, far from being "...una pobre muchacha...que acaba de fugarse de un colegio de monjas de Pau, donde

la había encerrado un tutor desaprensivo que la ha robado toda su fortuna..." (IV, p. 1468) is rather a woman well initiated in sex and who "...se preocupaba más de su maquillaje que de las medidas adoptadas por monsieur Poincaré para sanear la moneda francesa." (IV, p. 1337) Any doubt concerning a possible re-evaluation of the author's ideas through one of his characters is immediately rejected the moment we realize that Arencibia becomes the victim of Mignonne's untruthfulness and connivance.

While, in most instances, hostility toward women is manifested through various characters, at times we find the author himself displaying this attitude. Portrayal of women lacking intellectual capacity is not unusual in Jardiel's works. Antifeminist authors attempt to rationalize their feelings by expressing some of the more widely accepted negative views toward women inherited through the centuries. In Amor se escribe sin hache, after describing Sylvia Brums' undressing process, the author notes that her body "...se agitó en rápidos movimientos, mientras el cerebro meditaba despacho, pues lady Brums tenía más costumbre de mover el cuerpo que el cerebro, fenómeno bastante femenino." (IV, p. 1283)

In much the same manner as described in Amor se escribe sin hache, the author, following a thorough



description of Palmera Suaretti, the heroine of ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! adds that "...en cuanto a la inteligencia de Palmera Suaretti...Su inteligencia...Pero bueno, ¿para qué hablar de cosas irreales, verdad?" (IV, p. 28)

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Jardiel attempts to create a new version of one of the most popular characters of Spanish literature: Don Juan. The novel is preceded by what Jardiel calls Ensayo número 27.493 sobre Don Juan in which, through his unmatched application of humor, he attacks not only feminism, but those who practice it. He acknowledges that anyone whose relationship with the female is not directed toward the propagation of the species must be considered insane. For this reason, the role of the female in Politics, Education, or other professional fields is inconceivable. Man, he continues, becomes a feminist when he reaches the point where he can no longer satisfy a woman. Don Juan is an individual not concerned with propagation; therefore, he concludes, he must be insane:

Don Juan es, asimismo, un idiota--por el motivo de que hace falta ser un idiota completo para vivir pendiente exclusivamente de las mujeres. Y no se vea en esto un ataque a la mujer: la mujer es admirable (tan admirable por sus cualidades espirituales y físicas, como es

admirable, por su precisión y excelente factura, un mechero automático suizo). Pero ¿qué diríais del hombre que, desde el instante de despertar hasta el momento de dormirse, durante todo el día, a todas horas, sin más descanso que el imprescindible para comer y almorzar, se dedicase a apagar y a encender un mechero automático suizo? (IV, pp. 823-824)

Pedro de Valdivia, the male protagonist of Pero... ¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? had learned from his uncle Félix that women should never be the object of his love. A woman should never be loved simply for being a woman but because of the physical pleasures she is capable of giving. He writes: "La mujer no debe ser nuestra compañera, debe ser nuestra vanidad, nuestro objeto de lujo, un cacharro de adorno, un capricho, un juguete, una pelota de tenis. Para vencerla hay que violarla; para interesarla, no hacerle caso; para dominarla, tratarla como a una cosa de fácil sustitución." (IV, p. 911)

#### UNFAITHFUL ASPECT OF WOMEN

Unfaithful women appear frequently in the writings of Jardiel Poncela. If Sylvia Brums acts with full knowledge of her husband in Amor se escribe sin hache it is because Jardiel wants to convey a double negative

aspect of women. In addition to the more obvious unfaithfulness itself, the husband's awareness of his wife's infidelity can only be interpreted as an intentional attempt of ridding himself of her nagging. During one of the many meetings between Sylvia and Zambombo he complains that her husband is preventing them from seeing one another more often. "Amigo mío", she replies, "precisamente el inconveniente de las mujeres casadas es que suelen ser esposas de sus maridos." (IV, p. 1294) Another aspect of unfaithfulness occurs toward the end of the novel when the vessel on which Sylvia and Zambombo are traveling is shipwrecked leaving them on a deserted island. At the first opportunity, Sylvia runs away with a group of men who had come on the island with a boat, leaving only a note to Zambombo which reads: "...es inútil que vuelva a buscarme nunca. Ha muerto usted para mí y su recuerdo sólo me produce asco." (IV, p. 1447)

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! there are two instances in which Jardiel points to the unfaithful aspect of women. In the first case, it concerns Palmera who, prior to becoming a famous "vedette" had been married to a bullfighter. Four months after the marriage we find her so tired of her husband that "...se presentaba en casa del escultor." (IV, p. 37) The second instance in-

volves Mimí Bazar, the prostitute who had robbed Mario of his wallet and who subsequently had married a baron. The "baronesa Cáttaro", as she is now known, grows gradually weary of her new, unaccustomed life and does not hesitate one moment to betray her husband with one of her old friends, "el Poresosmundos", who had come to murder Mario.

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Pedro de Valdivia had inherited from his uncle Félix all that was to single him out later in his dealings with women. It was through his uncle that he had learned that women--all women--are unfaithful and should not be trusted. His uncle had repeated to him many times that "...la mujer tiende a abandonar al que le ama, por lo cual--y para evitarlo--el hombre debe apresurarse a abandonarla después de haberla amado. Los sentimientos deben analizarse y nunca obedecerse. El instante de seducir a la mujer es aquel momento en que su belleza nos tienta, y el instante de abandonarla es aquel momento en que su suerte empieza a preocuparnos." (IV, p. 910)

## TRoublesome ASPECT OF WOMEN

When Zambombo, in Amor se escribe sin hache, proposed to Arencibia to allow his wife to live with him permanently, he refused. In explaining the reason for his refusal, Arencibia compared his wife Sylvia to a house. Just as anyone could benefit from a house by inhabiting it and enjoying it, anyone could benefit from Sylvia by using her and deriving pleasure from her flesh. However, possessing a house on a permanent basis would entail the sale of this house by the owner who would, most likely, refuse to sell it. In the same manner, for someone to "own" Sylvia permanently it would mean for Arencibia to give her up, and this he was unwilling to do. When Zambombo objected that a woman is not like a house, Arencibia noted: "no. No es igual; produce menos y gasta más. Para obtener una casa hay que comenzar por levantarla y para obtener una mujer hay que empezar por acostarla." (IV, p. 1300) Citing that, in order to rent a house, one must pay rent while Zambombo did not contribute anything for the "use" of Sylvia, Arencibia remarked: "¿Que no me da nada?... ¡Ya lo creo que me da usted! Me da usted lo que hay de máspreciado en el mundo. Me da usted la tranquilidad... porque las horas que ella emplea en entre-

vistarse con usted, en maquillarse y vestirse para la entrevista, en recordar lo hablado, en pensar lo que va a decirles al día siguiente, etc. etc., son otras tantas horas en que prescinde de molestarme a mí." (IV, pp. 1300-1301)

In the prologue to ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Jardiel Poncela refers to women as blind forces of nature. He states that all literary endeavors are the results of women and that it is difficult to imagine what would happen if they were in a position to realize the tremendous powers they hold over men. In connection with the ability of women to inspire literary works Jardiel asserts in the prologue that ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! was written as a result of one of his many unfortunate love affairs. Carefully avoiding mentioning any names, Jardiel states that this woman almost succeeded in inducing him to abandon plans for the novel. Hence the statement he attributes to Oscar Wilde: "Una mujer nos sugerirá una obra; pero esta misma mujer nos impedirá realizarla." (IV, p. 13) However, he only partially agrees with this statement and he feels that Wilde is correct only as long as there is no love between man and woman since under the influence of love it is impossible to be creative. He compares the illusion of love to the running of an engine:

"...marcha bien al principio; empieza luego a tener pannes y, por fin, queda inservible." (IV, p. 13) Continuing on this subject, Jardiel adds: "Un hombre que se enamora es siempre un imbécil elevado al cubo. Cuando se trata de un individuo genial, ese individuo escribe La Divina Comedia (caso Dante Alighieri) y le amarga la vida para siempre a la Humanidad. Y, por el contrario, cuando se trata de un hombre vulgar, ese hombre hace oposiciones a Hacienda, se casa en la Parroquia...y se amarga la vida para siempre a sí mismo." (IV, p. 23) There are times that Jardiel's antifeminism is even transmitted through female characters. In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Palmera Suaretti, unable to seduce Mario due to his drunkenness, sees with utter disgust and jealousy the portrait of Julieta, Mario's bride-to-be, in his apartment. Through Palmera, Jardiel explores future months of cohabitation and sees nothing but darkness. On the contrary, following the first several months of erotic fever, Mario would certainly become painfully aware of his error and would pay very dearly for the virginity of Julieta: "Le celaría; le coartaría; le originaría preocupaciones de toda especie; le obligaría a hacer visitas estúpidas; le hablaría de nimiedades irresistibles; le aburriría con su ingenuidad; se le colgaría del brazo, como un bastón de

barra de hierro, forzándole a llevar continuamente la mano en cabestrillo; le daría hijos, es decir: nuevas preocupaciones y nuevos desvelos"...(IV, p. 89) The troublesome aspect of women is also transmitted by Jardiel to the reader through married characters or through those who are contemplating marriage. This situation appears in the early stages of Palmera's life when, following a brief affair with a bullfighter, "...se casó con él. Porque no todo iba a ser proporcionarle alegrías." (IV, p. 36) In some other instances, the same aspect is expressed by comparing woman's nature to a destructive force, such as war. This unusual characterization of women is presented by Cienfuegos, whom Mario had met on the train on his way to Siberia. He states: "Las mujeres son como las guerras: el que las ve de lejos y sin tocarlas más que con la imaginación, las encuentra magníficas y heroicas, y aplaude y grita: ¡Viva! ¡A la guerra! ¡Es hermoso morir por la Patria!; mientras que los que han conocido las guerras de cerca y han saboreado varias y las han resistido hasta el fin, éstos no hablan de ellas sino para condenarlas duramente...aunque al surgir una guerra nueva sean los primeros en alistarse para volver al frente..." (IV, p. 269)

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Pedro



de Valdivia had embarked on what he believed to be a routine adventure with Vivola Adamant; however, he receives the shock of his life upon learning that Vivola is not the least interested in him and that she is so well initiated in sex that the number of her adventures by far exceeds his own. His self assurance completely shattered by Vivola's confession, Pedro listens with astonishment to the unveiling of her philosophy: "La mujer después de crear al hombre le hace perecer; es cierto yo he hecho perecer a millares de ellos, arruinándolos físicamente o económicamente. Y ¿qué? Tal conducta tiene su lógica: es un arrepentimiento. Porque el hombre es una mala bestia tan grande, que la mujer, después de crearlo, comprende que su deber es corregir la equivocación. Y lo destruye." (IV, pp. 874-875)

#### DEGRADING ASPECT OF THE SEXUAL ACT

It has already been observed in Chapter II of this study that Jardiel Poncela, far from exhibiting full-fledged misogynystic tendencies, regarded the companionship of women as a necessity. Jardiel's insistence on the search for "la mujer cúbica" or "la mujer interior" could be interpreted as an effort to rationalize the failures

of his numerous love affairs; in so doing, Jardiel also attempted to hide the purely sexual nature of his relationships pretending instead to be searching for the ideal woman. For this motive, expressions which are degrading to the sexual act are, indeed, surprising and can only be explained in the light of possible negative personal experiences. This degrading aspect appears in Amor se escribe sin hache during a conversation between Arencibia and Zambombo. Unimpressed by the latter's theory that, even when love disappears, there is still the satisfaction of experiencing physical pleasure through the sexual act, Arencibia argues:

¿Ha pensado usted alguna vez en lo poco que vale ese amor espasmódico de los sentidos?... Piense y verá que es un instante, un suspiro... Llego a más: si es usted un hombre digno y delicado, la satisfacción de los sentidos de que habla, constituirá para usted un sufrimiento, una tortura de toda su carne, porque se esforzará en contener y retener su naturaleza rápida para aguardar a que estalle la lenta naturaleza de la mujer. Por el contrario, si usted es un hombre sin delicadeza y sin dignidad, uno de esos hombres que sólo se preocupan de su propio goce y dejan siempre a la mujer hambrienta, entonces le odiará con toda su furia y en cada palabra, en cada gesto, en cada escena de la vida, ella verterá una gota del veneno de su odio y la felicidad del amor será para usted un mito rodeado de nebulosidades. (IV, pp. 1321-1322)

Continuing with the same intensity and sharpness, Arencibia

refuses even to concede the pleasure of contemplating the beauty of the female body, stating instead that: "Este acto sucio y molesto que tanto han divinizado los poetas--gentes imaginativas que no conocen la práctica del amor--no reserva para el hombre ni siquiera el placer de ver y de contemplar, pues en semejante montón informe de carnes palpitantes no pueden apreciarse las gracias femeninas, porque falta la perspectiva, que es la pincelada suprema..." (IV, p. 1322) If there is any doubt as to whether it is the author speaking through Arencibia, the hesitancy should be removed immediately when he focuses on the overidealization of love and women by the poets, one of the basic motivating factors which impelled Jardiel to write Amor se escribe sin hache.

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Jardiel considers the sexual act merely as a mechanical performance. Such words as "te amo", "te adoro", "¡Mí alma!", are nothing more than "...palabras superficiales..." and those expressing them are guilty of untruthfulness since "...nadie dice la verdad más que al decir TE DESEO..." (IV, p. 74) Continuing on the same subject, Jardiel accuses men of acting like monkeys when they persist in pursuing a woman for sexual pleasures: "Se ha amontonado demasiada literatura sobre este acto; se le ha elevado a la cate-

goría de sentimiento, y los hombres persiguen a las mujeres murmurando conceptos poéticos y filosófico. Y las mujeres les sonríen a los hombres con aire entre tierno y celestial. El macaco humano, harto de pelar cacahuètes, se obstina en desenvolver "marrons glacés". ¿Y qué? Con cacahuètes o con "marrons glacés" jamás dejará de ser macaco."(IV, p. 74) If, at times, the degrading aspect of the sexual act is described in a less serious fashion, Jardiel's message remains, nevertheless, very clear. Underneath the more apparent veil of humor, there is in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! a strata of sarcasm never before displayed in other novels. The following passage describes a love scene between Palmera Suaretti and Mario Esfarcies: "Palmera y Mario dedicaron quince kilómetros a trasladarse de una boca a otra varias colonias de microbios. La 'vedette' le transmitió a Mario once millones de bacilos de Koch y Mario le cedió a Palmera siete millones quinientas mil bacterias de Pfeiffer. Concluido lo cual, ambos respiraron dulcemente, se miraron a los ojos rebosando poesía y se apretaron las manos con apasionamiento. (¡He ahí el amor!) (IV, p. 362)

In the next novel, Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Pedro, following his setback suffered at the hands of Vivola, has now reached what Jardiel defines as

an absurdity having allowed himself to fall in love:

"El verdadero amor no discurre y cuando discurre, discurre tonterías. El verdadero amor es, por esencia, mudo, y cuando habla, dice unas cursilerías imponentes. El verdadero amor no es ingenioso, ni brillante, ni elocuente, ni emocionante. El verdadero amor es de una imbecilidad inaudita." (IV, p. 1100) Vivola's rejection of Pedro had caused a change in him which can only be explained in terms of total rejection and abhorration of women and sex--misogyny. First, he rejects two German sisters, Camila and Gela saying to them that their hair reminded him of "dos 'bocks' de cervezas" (IV, p. 1105) Then, when a Russian girl, Tatiana, pointing to her generous breasts, invited him to touch them, he replies: "Gracias. No soy chófer." (IV, p. 1105) Lili, the Spanish girl who, through her account, had lost her virginity when she gave herself to Pedro, had no better luck the second time when Pedro suggested she should find someone else with whom she could lose her virginity for the eighth time. He treated Lee, an English girl, and Germaine and Danise, two French girls the same he had treated the others. He was particularly harsh with Denise when she stated she would forgive him for having betrayed her with others: "Pues yo no te perdono nada...Ni el que me quieras, ni el que engañes a

tu marido, ni el que seas linda, ni el que seas mujer."  
(IV, p. 1106)

#### MATERIALISTIC ASPECT OF WOMEN

The materialistic aspect of women, like their vanity, is an inherent part of each feminine character in the novels of Jardiel. Each of their movements, actions, intrigues and supposed affection is motivated by their love for material things. When Zambombo, in Amor se escribe sin hache, objecting to Arencibia's negative attitude toward women and love, states that "la mujer personifica el amor y la ternura" Arencibia replies that "...el amor de las mujeres...es un tema inagotable para el cretinismo agudo de muchos escritores..." and that, in reality, their love is motivated by "...la cantidad de pesetas y de la cantidad de espasmos que usted le regale. No les dé usted dinero, no les dé usted espasmos y verá lo que duran su ternura y su amor. Para contar con su amor y con su ternura es imprescindible desmayarlas con frecuencia, y atender a sus gastos. Hay hombres que, embebidos en su trabajo, no sienten la necesidad del dinero ni la impaciencia sexual; la mujer que pueda vivir en esas condiciones, está por nacer todavía." (IV, p. 1321)

A more bitter expression of the materialistic aspect of women appears toward the end of the novel when Zambombo reflects on his failures with Sylvia. Wandering about through the streets of Madrid, he frequently sees the disgusting spectacle of young, beautiful and elegant girls "...acampañadas de viejos repugnantes y litiasirre-nálicos, desbordantes de dinero y de lascivia." (IV, p. 1463) Seeing in these scenes the obvious materialistic interest of these women, he wonders: "¿Por qué permite Dios...que la carne divina de las mujeres se manche de babas? Y ellas, ¿por qué son tan marranas que lo toleran?" (IV, p. 1463)

A hint of the materialistic aspect of the woman with whom Jardiel was involved in 1929 has already been given in the second chapter of this study; therefore, it is not surprising that Palmera Suaretti of ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! should embody this characteristic. Her relationship with "el Marqués del Córceles de Santiago" was dictated primarily by her love for money so that when she agrees to "sacrifice" herself by becoming his mistress, "...además de lágrimas...el marqués expelió...billetes de mil pesetas..." (IV, p. 32) A more humorous aspect of materialism is presented following Palmera's move to seduce Mario in her apartment. After various futile ef-

forts, Palmera falls unconscious on the floor. All attempts to revive her fail until her maid Adelita "...recurrió a una estratagema definitiva. Tiró al suelo un duro, que vibró alegremente. Y la 'vedette' se incorporó exclamando:--¡Es bueno!" (IV, p. 80)

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Pedro de Valdivia had learned from his uncle that to love a woman is to perish, and that to bend toward her love is the same as to bend toward a sewer, risking the danger of dirtying oneself and even risking falling in. Out of the mouth of a woman, only her lips should be regarded with interest, but never the words. Finally, Félix adds: "...la mujer seducida es una esclava; la mujer amada es un tirano y en amor no debe haber otro tirano que el hombre. Esperar generosidad de la mujer es como esperar el paso de un expreso en el desierto del Sahara." (IV, pp. 910-911)

When, late in the novel, the author reveals that Pedro had been hired to seduce Vivola thus preventing her marriage to an old, rich man, Pedro decides that his only chance of succeeding is to appeal to her sense of morality. When he accuses her of selling herself, she replies:

"Casarse con un viejo no es vender las caricias; es empeñarlas, y empeñarlas por un corto tiempo: el tiempo que el viejo tarda en morirse...Por el contrario, casarse



con un joven sí es vender las caricias; es venderlas para toda la vida, puesto que para toda la vida se las entregamos." (IV, p. 1090) As a last desperate attempt, Pedro appeals to Vivola to abandon her plans in the name of love, an appeal, however, that she rejects with even harsher words: "...¡Que lo diga quien sabe que el amor más desinteresado y más noble sólo está hecho de egoísmo y de interés; y que el amor más puro se nutre de impureza; y que el más inmaterial se apoya en el sexo! ¡Que el hombre harto de besar mujeres le diga eso a la mujer harta de besar hombres!...Déjame con mi marqués sordo, estúpido y senil...¡Déjame! Se cae en ciertos matrimonios como se cae en la prostitución y en el suicidio: cuando ya no posee uno ninguna esperanza donde agarrarse. Déjame hundirme...Quizás tenemos el deber de volar sobre nubes blancas, pero ¿a quién puede negársele el derecho de revolcarse en el fango negro?" (IV, pp. 1090-1091)

#### DOMINEERING ASPECT OF WOMEN

Before marrying Arencibia, lady Brums, in Amor se escribe sin hache, had been married twice. Her first husband had died on the same night of their wedding and the second husband had committed suicide because of her

unfaithfulness. In describing the nature of her second marriage, lady Brums remembered with intense joy the power she exercised over her husband, adding that "...lo que busco es más un esclavo que un amante...Las mujeres amamos la esclavitud...Amamos la esclavitud ajena. Sin embargo, no todas podemos practicar esa esclavitud. Yo sólo una vez pude gozar del maravilloso espectáculo..." (IV, p. 1285) Toward the end of their first meeting, it was clear that Sylvia "approved" Zambombo as her next lover; however, she felt compelled to hide her true feelings "...para que se vuelva loco por mí y me desee y me busque y empiece a ser mi esclavo." (IV, p. 1287)

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! the domineering aspect of women is best exemplified by the relationship existing between Palmera Suaretti and "el Marqués del Córce! de Santiago." Beside the more obvious materialistic aspect of this union, it is possible to see a constant domineering attitude on the part of Palmera, due mainly to the difference in age. The degrading attitude of the "marqués", his meak obedience to her commands: "Marqués, envíame el coche mañana", or "Marqués, átame ese zapato", and "Marqués, te agradecería no volvieres por ahí en mes y medio" (IV, p. 32) can only be interpreted as a move of Jardiel to unveil his utter disgust for man's dependence

on women.

The domineering aspect of women in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? is presented through a conversation between Pedro and Luís Campa, a painter who was anxious to uncover the secret for Pedro's success with women. Expressing compassion for him, Pedro states: "... el cetro del sexo masculino continúa en manos femeninas desde Eva. La mujer es la dictadora del sexo; la tirana del sexo; la emperatriz, la reina absoluta. Todo problema sexual lo plantea o lo resuelve, lo enmaraña o lo simplifica por sí sola la mujer: el hombre--a lo sumo--escribe las cifras y las fórmulas en el encerado; pero es siempre la mujer quien las piensa, las calcula, las combina y las dicta...Por eso la mujer pierde su virginidad en el amor cuando quiere, mientras que el hombre la pierde cuando puede..." (IV, p. 971) This description fits to perfection the character of Vivola Adamant.

#### CAPRICIOUS AND FRIVOLOUS ASPECT OF WOMEN

One of the most frequently recurring themes in the novels of Jardiel is the circus-like performance of male characters in order to please the frivolity of women. In Amor se escribe sin hache these heroics are performed

in a number of ways; first, in order to conquer Sylvia, Zambombo resorts to innumerable tricks such as completely wrecking a bar in the "bajos fondos" of Madrid in order to impress her with his courage. Then, in a more extreme case, Zambombo attempts a fake suicide to win her over again following one of her frequent cold periods. Finally, to alleviate the boredom of riding on a train, Zambombo tries to please Mignonne by completely devastating the dining car, tossing dishes, silverware, and pots out of the window and aiming glasses at light bulbs. When Zambombo, in another instance, puzzled by Sylvia's coldness toward him, inquires about the reasons for her rejection, she replies: "Me gustaste, porque te vi inexperto, provinciano, y algo tonto. Después arrancaste varios chispazos en mí ilusión, haciendo cosas divertidas; te prometo, porque te estimo, que si haces más cosas divertidas, verás brillar también más chispazos. Pero hasta que eso ocurra, no pidas nada de mí. (IV, p. 1400)

Commenting on the fantastic tales narrated by "el doctor Flagg" whose purpose in this novel is precisely that of focusing on the capricious aspect of Sylvia, she adds: "El doctor Flagg, que físicamente es grotesco y que para una mujer vulgar resultaría indeseable, para mí es un hombre interesantísimo, un tipo nuevo, algo que yo no

había conocido aún. Su figura es abominable, pero sus mentiras son maravillosas. Flagg me gusta. Luego, acaso me guste otro. No intentes oponerte a nada..." (IV, pp. 1400-1401)

Vivola Adamant exhibits in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? much of the same frivolity as Sylvia Brums. As experienced as she is in sex, Vivola has a predilection for eccentric types. Nothing that Pedro tries in his attempts to win her over yields any significant results. At one point, when she is told that Pedro has grown a beard, her capricious nature makes her interpret this as "...un recurso de...imaginación de seductor..." (IV, p. 1126) However, upon discovering that Pedro has shaved his beard, her anger reaches the point of hate: "¡¡Vete!! Hasta ahora, aún te admiraba... Habías dejado de ser el 'hombre-standard' para convertirme en un tipo nuevo, un 'gentleman' barbado... ¡¡Vete!!... ¡¡Vete, imbécil!!...Te desprecio...Te odio...(IV, p. 1126)

#### VAIN ASPECT OF WOMEN

Vanity is an attribute which fits to perfection the character of Sylvia Brums in Amor se escribe sin hache. To illustrate each expression of vanity displayed by

Sylvia would mean the re-creation of her entire dialogue. One meeting between Sylvia and Zambombo will suffice to illustrate this attitude. Zambombo has just welcomed Sylvia into his study and, after displaying part of her beautiful legs, "...se levantó vivamente, arrancó de un tirón la piel de zorro chingue que ceñía su garganta, se despojó del vestido amarillo-fuego, y de una combinación aurífera, y de pie en el centro de la estancia dio una vuelta lenta, como un maniquí, dejando aquilatar su belleza transparente...(IV, pp. 1278-1279) The same Sylvia later reacts with a conceited attitude upon being addressed "señora" by Zambombo: "No me llame señora...Debe usted llamarme sencillamente 'divina'. El espectáculo de mi cuerpo desnudo autoriza y obliga a que se me divinice..." (IV, p. 1280)

Silma Drake, in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, in addition to being a cruel woman is also a vain and overly proud person. When Pedro learned that she had killed his uncle Félix, he pretends to show interest in her in order to seek revenge. Silma, much older than Pedro, is aware that her charm is vanishing and she does not hesitate to throw herself in his arms. At the appropriate time, Pedro obtains his revenge by striking Silma where she is most vulnerable--in her

vanity and her pride. Purposely turning the conversation in the area of her charm, Pedro states:

-Te aseguro que me consta que aún gustas mucho por ahí...Sin ir más lejos, tengo un amigo que me ha expresado varias veces la satisfacción con que te raptaría para llevarte a su casa.  
-¿Es posible?--habló ella sonriendo--. ¿Y quién es ese amigo que desea llevarme a su casa?  
-Un anticuario. (IV, p. 933)

#### VIOLENT ASPECT OF WOMEN

Though, in most instances, this aspect must not be taken seriously, there are times in which real violence is manifested by female characters in Jardiel's novels. In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!, violence is often a characteristic of Palmera Suaretti, meant by the author to emphasize the degrading role of "el Marqués del Córce de Santiago" in his relationship with Palmera. Describing the old man's submission to a woman at the lowest possible level, Palmera forces the "marqués" to physically carry the unconsciously drunk Mario to her apartment. Seeking to dissuade her from the idea of raping Mario, he approaches her, slightly touching her arm. This causes her to react as if "...se tratara de una mosca verde..." and she sharply warns him: "¡Si me tocas te tiro por el

balcón!" (IV, p. 81) Likewise, on his way to Siberia by train, Mario meets an old couple. When the old gentleman agrees with Mario that women are, by nature, prostitutes and cowards, his wife, "...la duquesa de Elswick, con la que el semnopiteco había tenido la desdicha de casarse... y que era como un loro, sólo que sin plumas, le cogió por un brazo...y le atizó un Boedeker en la cabeza, derribándolo. Luego lo enganchó por los pelos y se lo llevó a la rastra hasta el extremo del coche donde ella se deleitaba hacía rato con el 'Red Magazine'...apoyando los pies en el estómago del vencido." (IV, pp. 272-273)

Another woman through whom Jardiel manifests this hostility is Silma Drake in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Silma had become the latest lover of don Félix. When the time comes for him to terminate his relationship with Silma, she physically attacks him and upon his return home, we are told, "...[él] no se iba solo. Llevaba un puñal clavado en la espalda." (IV, p. 925)

#### BEASTLY ASPECT OF WOMEN

The expression of this extreme aspect of antifeminism, although not frequent, appears in Amor se escribe sin



hache as well as in Jardiel's other novels. It is manifested in the form of utter disgust toward women in general, especially following extreme disillusionment such as that experienced by Zambombo after Sylvia's desertion. In this instance, we find Zambombo engaged in an aimless effort to find a solution to his problems. Noticing a group of children playing in the street, he momentarily wishes he had a son; however, he soon realizes that in order to have a son "...es imprescindible soportar a una mujer... Y cuando se tiene un perro, es necesario bajarlo a la calle..." (IV, p. 1459)

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! it is even more surprising to find elements of bestiality in the treatment of female characters because, as we already know, the heroine of the novel, Palmera Suaretti, represents Jardiel's fourth serious experience with a woman. Unable to extract any response from Mario, Palmera decides to, at least, satisfy her sexual appetite by raping him while he is unconscious. In an attempt to rationalize her behavior, she states: "¡Bah!.. Nuestra simpleza mayor es creernos superiores. Yo misma, ¿soy otra cosa que una pobre bestia bien formada que interpreta ¡Miau-Miau! todas las noches y que está deseando sentirse atravesada por un hombre que mañana probablemente ya no le importará?

...Convienes mucho no perder el equilibrio. Este hombre me gusta; con hacerlo mío, el asunto queda resuelto. Y si no oigo de sus labios las palabras 'te quiero,' eso no impedirá que le sienta bien cerca de mis entrañas."

(IV, p. 76) We note a recurrence of this aspect later on in the novel. This time, the object of Jardiel's bitterness is a Danish girl, Gelda Bunner. Claiming to be a very religious person who abstained from sex, Gelda finally gives in to Mario, and "...se dispuso a concluir su desayuno, cumpliendo con esta ley infalible merced a la cual las mujeres aparentemente más espirituales son siempre las mayores apasionadas de todo lo animal." (IV, p. 273)

In Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, when Pedro meets Vivola for the first time, the reader is immediately aware of his attempts to minimize her importance. Not at all bothered by Pedro's attitude, Vivola listens impassively to his theory on women: "Mi práctica y mis éxitos sólo me han valido para saber que, de cuantos microbios atentan contra la vida del hombre, la mujer es el microbio más destructor. Y esta vida brillante, este fluir y refluir de amores, este no haber hombre que no me envidie ni mujer que no me ame, ha ido minando mi organismo y sumergiéndome cada día un poco en las arenas movedizas de la neurastenia." (IV, p. 867)

## MASOCHISTIC AND SADISTIC ASPECTS OF WOMEN

This aspect is minimal in the novels of Jardiel. We find its expression in the love experience that Zambombo had with Ramona in Amor se escribe sin hache. Noting that aggressiveness in a woman is not unusual, Zambombo reveals the shocking experience of his first night of love with Ramona: "Sé lo que es amar; conozco todas las fierezas de la pasión: mordiscos, arañazos, traumatismos que conducen a la tumefacción. Pero nada de eso conocería en su más alto aprecio si no hubiese amado Ramona. Las palizas que su entusiasmo me propinó, en un trimestre de dulzuras, todavía se conocen a la perfección en mi piel. Un día se me llevó un trocito de oreja, una tarde se quedó con medio labio y una noche me arrancó al besarme en el brazo toda la manga del 'smoking'..." (IV, p. 1260) A more comical treatment of this aspect appears in the description of Zambombo's romance with Luisita, a romantic girl driven by an uncontrollable urge to read "novelas de amor" and to relive experiences narrated in these novels. Since the heroine of the last novel she had read would frequently betray her lover, Luisita began imitating her in spite of Zambombo's pleadings. Convinced that he had exhausted all remedies, except one, Zambombo states: "...alcé la

manga de mi camisa, la doblé sobre el antebrazo y le aticé a mi novia doce bofetadas gigantescas, seguidas de seis puntapiés indescriptibles. Y Luisita se colgó a mi garganta y me juró amor eterno." (IV, p. 1256)

In a very similar situation in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, Pedro was experiencing some difficulties in handling Sylvia Brums. When his uncle inquired about the methods used in subduing her, Pedro replied: "La largué una bofetada seguida de dos puntapiés indescriptibles...Entonces ella gritó: '¡Ven! ¡Te adoro!' Y ha sido una noche divina." (IV, p. 919)

#### MISCELLANEOUS

There are other aspects of Jardiel's antifeminism which, because of their very nature, cannot be classified under the categories already discussed in this chapter. They are important elements, however, and presentation of some of the most relevant ones might contribute to a better understanding of the author and his works.

We have already seen how the frequent failures experienced by Jardiel, his four illegitimate children and his subsequent refusal to join in wedlock with any of the mothers of these children may be interpreted as an

indication that Jardiel viewed women as commodities--as means with whom he could satisfy his sexual urge. This same attitude may be observed in Arencibia. When he, Arencibia, refuses to give up Sylvia to Zambombo, he first justifies this reluctance by attributing his denial to his altruistic concern of not wishing to render his life miserable by imposing upon him the nagging Sylvia. Later on, however, the real motive is unveiled and it is certainly not because of his altruistic concern for Zambombo nor is it due to his love for his wife; rather, as Arencibia affirms: "...me he habituado a ella. Son varios años de matrimonio. Estoy ya acostumbrado a su perfume, a su risa, a su actitud al ponerse las ligas, a oír el timbre de su voz, a ese montón de cosas íntimas (sin las cuales la vida se hace imposible) que nacen en la larga comunidad de dos personas de distinto sexo." (IV, p. 1301) A more precise allusion to Jardiel's concept of women as commodities--sexual commodities--is presented by Fermín, who also gives us the meaning of the title Amor se escribe sin hache. Fermín maintains that "amor", along with many other words which are written without initial "h", is not important and that, consequently, it should not be taken seriously. He notes, furthermore, that such important words as "hijos", "honor",

"hombre", and "Hostia" representing the materialization of Christ are all written with initial "h". When those listening to Fermín's peculiar theory burst into laughter, he protests: "Os hago reír, ¿verdad? Reír es lo más importante del mundo; y 'humorismo' se escribe con hache." (IV, p. 1487) Zambombo, who was listening very intently to Fermín's words, proudly interrupts him, noting that, after all, Fermín shares his same conviction, namely that since "mujer" is not written with initial "h", then it must not be important. But Fermín immediately corrects him by adding: "¡Naturalmente! ¡Pues claro! Porque tampoco a la mujer se le debe tomar en serio...Porque para ser feliz, para no sufrir, para no volverse pesimista y amargado, no hay que buscar en la mujer más que lo que yo busco, lo que se escribe con hache: la 'hembra'..." (IV, p. 1488)

In ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!, Jardiel presents another peculiar concept of women by comparing them to light bulbs. Both women and light bulbs are of a similar nature "...porque son frágiles; porque viven gracias al filamento metálico; porque presumen de transparente; porque irradian calor; porque aumentan su luz cuando van a fundirse; porque son imprescindibles en los salones; porque están vacías por dentro; porque todas pueden citar el nombre de un ciudadano que les ha hecho la rosca." (IV,

p. 116) In a similar manner, reflecting Jardiel's powerful imagination, Mario, while contemplating suicide, notices out of the window a man lighting a gas lamp and thinks of a woman in terms of a "farol":

Los faroles--como las mujeres--son todos diferentes y todos iguales: brillan, como las mujeres también, y lucen más de noche que de día. Aparentemente, los faroles y las mujeres alumbran el camino del hombre; pero es sólo en la apariencia; de pronto se acaba el gas del farol y el hombre se encuentra más a oscuras que antes...; los faroles son iguales que las mujeres: delgados, esbeltos y siempre recién pintados, parecen estar cerca uno de otro, más basta fijarse bien para comprender que la aproximación es fingida y que--por el contrario--nunca dejan de guardarse las distancias. Y el farolero es el hombre: va de farol en farol--o de mujer en mujer--los encuentra apagados y él, con un golpe de quinqué, les inyecta la luz de la vida y se larga...(IV, pp. 117-118)

Though seldom appearing in the works of Jardiel, we have in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? evidence of disrespect for feminine religious orders. Pedro, as a modern don Juan, does not limit himself to seducing worldly women; in this instance, he relates how he succeeded in conquering three nuns, one of whom was a Mother Superior. When Campsa questions the entry in Pedro's files, "casadas", he replies: "¡Caramba! Como todas las monjas...¿no ha oído decir que son esposas del Señor?" (IV, p. 1004)

LA "TOURNEE" DE DIOS

The obvious hostility with which women have been treated in Amor se escribe sin hache (1928), ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! (1929) and Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? (1930) is manifest under a series of aspects ranging from specific accusations of unfaithfulness and untruthfulness to the more general charges of intellectual mediocrity and biological inferiority. The fact that Jardiel Poncela exhibits a general negative attitude toward women and that his antifeminism is as varied as the nature of the characters presented is quite evident; however, the often unrealistic make-up of female characters, as well as the overexaggerated and artificial aspects of situations and dialogues preclude a totally biographical view of these novels. There are, to be certain, elements of an autobiographical nature in all of his novels, but the work which can best be described as almost totally autobiographical is without a doubt La "tournee" de Dios (1932). Characters such as Sylvia Brums of Amor se escribe sin hache and Vivola Adamant of Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? as well as other minor female characters are often too sensational and, above all, too conveniently equipped with just the



proper "formula" of negativism to reflect any single real woman and any one single experience. For this reason, they must be viewed only as vehicles through which Jardiel expresses and, indeed, attempts to justify his antifeminism. The character of Palmera Suaretti represents a different perspective. We know that Jardiel had become involved with a popular Mexican actress, probably by the name of Suárez, at about the same time he began writing ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! (1929). Palmera, though not free of the usual negative adjectives typifying other women, is by far a more believable character than the others, with the exception of Natalia Lorzain in La "tournee" de Dios. She does not boast after conquering men, and certainly she does not change lovers at the rate of two per week as in the case of Sylvia Brums in Amor se escribe sin hache; likewise, she is not the impregnable fortress that Vivola Adamant had been in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? She is simply a woman, a phenomenal "vedette" displaying what Jardiel considers normal qualities in a woman, any woman: an insatiable thirst for sex. The nature of La "tournee" de Dios, however, is too similar to actual events in the life of Jardiel for us to discard the possibility of an autobiographical writing; for this reason, and also because it represents Jardiel

at his deepest and bitterest level, this novel merits special consideration.

Written between March 2 and June 12, 1932, La "tournee" de Dios is in two parts and can easily be viewed as two separate novels. The first part deals with the unfortunate love affair of Federico Orellana, a well known humorist author. The second part is an account of the preparations made when it is announced that God will arrive on Earth and visit Madrid. We obtain the first indication of a possible autobiographical aspect of this book in its Prologue. Here, Jardiel confesses that, following a sentimental letdown, he escaped the confusion of the city seeking to recover peace of mind in the tranquillity of the country. The unhappy ending of Federico Orellana's affair with Natalia, the fact that he, like Jardiel, is a humorist author, as well as Jardiel's documented failure in one of his affairs at approximately the same time he began writing the novel are details which cannot be ignored. The novel, like others before this, reflects considerable hostility toward women; however, unlike other novels in which various aspects of antifeminism are expressed, in La "tournee" de Dios Jardiel concentrates his attacks on the untruthful aspect of women. The first part of this novel is antifeminist in nature primarily because, as an

autobiographical work, it reflects the author's own negative concept of women. The question might arise as to why this novel and not the others show autobiographical tendencies since generally all of his writings reflect the same perennial negative aspects of women. Why should Federico Orellana in La "tournee" de Dios be considered the principal exponent of Jardiel's hostility and not, as an instance, Zambombo in Amor se escribe sin hache, Mario Esfarciés in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! or Pedro de Valdivia in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Certainly all of these male protagonists represent the author at different stages expressing his antifeminism in different degrees of intensity during various situations. But we do not know the true nature of Mario, Zambombo or Pedro. The latter, for instance, professes what the author calls "donjuanismo", and his outlook on the different aspects of life is even more "inverosímil" than the others. Federico Orellana, on the other hand, is not only an author but a humorist like Jardiel. We also see, for instance, that Federico can often be found in theaters, in movie houses and in his newsrooms; this is precisely Jardiel's own environment. There is, in addition to this, the more obvious reference to Natalia Lorzain, a first actress who, without doubt, is the Mexican actress'

friend whom we mentioned in Chapter II.

Unlike the prior three novels, the expression of hostility toward women in La "tournee" de Dios is manifest mainly in Natalia's lack of candor. Federico de Orellana, also, engages in long discussions dealing with the more negative aspects of women with the only difference that in this novel this is accomplished in a more credible form. The author chooses believable situations under which the characters weigh the pros and cons of women. On one side, we have Federico who, like Zambombo in Amor se escribe sin hache, maintains the positive aspect of women; on the opposing side we meet a new character, Perico Espasa who, as an admitted homosexual, argues his case in favor of a negative consideration of women, stating that "...el amor es una goma elástica que los humanos, a fuerzas de tirar, consiguen que se alargue. Pero al cabo, uno de los dos que tiraban se cansa y suelta el extremo y la goma le da un porrazo en las narices al que todavía seguía tirando." (IV, p. 511) The situation changes, however, when Federico's unhappy relationship with Natalia forces him to assume a more negative stand, much in the same manner as Zambombo in Amor se escribe sin hache. It is evident from the very beginning that Natalia, the heroine, is interested in the

type of relationship entirely motivated by her sexual urge. Like Palmera Suaretti of ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!, Natalia resorts to trickery to achieve her goal. But here also there is a basic difference. By pretending that she had read all of Federico's novels and by making flattering remarks about something she really did not understand only to single out Federico as the best humorist author in Spain, Natalia was not only guilty of untruthfulness, but practically sold herself to Federico by pretending that her opinions coincided with his. This union, as might be suspected, soon begins to crumble lacking any degree of real basis. It is true that, logically, she had no reason to be untruthful to Federico since she gained nothing from the union that she could not have otherwise obtained. However, Federico saw in her action the "leitmotiv" for the actions of men and women: sex. Therefore, he felt justified when he insisted that she had indeed something to gain through her untruthfulness, "...lo único que una mujer persigue cuando lucha por hacerse agradable a un hombre: acostarse con él!... ¡Sí! ¡Acostarse! ¡Acostarse! Estoy harto de farsas, de ocultaciones y de medias palabras...Me duelen los nervios de ver cubrir con telas de púrpura las miserias del cuerpo y decir 'ideal' por 'realidad' y 'alma' por

'organismo'..." (IV, p. 484) To be exact, other than Federico's conviction that Natalia had tricked him and wounded his pride by lying to him, she had been a faithful companion to him and had given him no concrete reasons to justify a separation. Then, how could the actions of Federico be justified, particularly knowing that she was carrying his child? The only possible answer is that Federico, as an artist, lived in a world apart--a world, in effect, separate from tangible everyday reality. As an artist, he had been led to believe that Natalia understood him not only as a man, but also, and more importantly, as an artist living in a special and ideal world. By deceiving Federico, Natalia not only offended his pride, but also punctured the balloon of his ideals, so to speak, deflating it and causing it to crash to the ground. Natalia's actions, in the view of Federico, were taken in bad faith and were deceiving in that she employed unethical tactics only to appear to him a woman different from what she really was. Once the Pirandellian mask is removed from Natalia, and in spite of the fact that she might have even been a good wife, she cannot be forgiven by Federico. Thus far, Federico's bitterness and hostility, to a certain extent, can even be justified. However, from here on we have a recurrence of the old

Jardelian negativism which is so common in other novels. Natalia is suddenly transformed into a bitter, jealous woman driven by a deep hate and by a strong desire for revenge. It is not the kind of hate a person might feel for another as a result of deep-rooted and meaningful motives. It is rather "...odio de despecho, de furor y de venganza." Like Palmera Suaretti, who agreed to prostitute herself to an old man, Natalia returns to her old profession of actress in search of perhaps new challenges. In doing so, she betrays her selfishness by leaving her son with Federico, neglecting to see him for as long as a year and a half, thus demonstrating that she is not even a good mother. The idea that Natalia was trying to sever relations with her own son becomes even more noticeable when, upon her return to Madrid, she was not even aware that he was seriously ill. Her reasons for going to Federico's house were not motivated by the need to see her son, but to present herself to Federico. She was aware that her enormous success as an actress must not have gone unnoticed by her one time lover; so, her visit to him, rather than being interpreted as a courtesy visit, or as a need to see her son, was really an ego-boosting visit intended only to impress upon Federico the foolishness of his actions in seeking a separation. We

are no longer confronted with the timid, praising companion she had pretended to be in the early chapters; rather, we see a woman comparable in vulgarity only to Palmera Suaretti and as vain as Sylvia Brums. This is how Federico sees the change that he notices in Natalia:

"Natalia habla vulgarmente. Se expresa de un modo pedestre, vacuo y lamentable. Perdido el control inteligente que yo ejercía sobre ella, piensa simplezas, cuenta bobadas; pequeñeces grotescas de su profesión o grandezas ridículas de su vida. Y opina tonterías; unas tonterías fantásticas..." (IV, pp. 765-766) Natalia had, in sum, returned to her original self, which to the eyes of Federico amounted to a little more than nothing. This view of women as insignificant creatures unless enlightened by the influence of men is, in La "tournee" de Dios, the essence of Jardiel's message. It is expressed, for instance, in his interpretation of the sexual act which he considered an unilateral phenomenon--a process of "transmisión, de transfusión, de ósmosis" during which only the female is the beneficial recipient of male generosity. The woman, who according to Jardiel, has nothing to transmit to the male, receives through this act not only the seed of future life, but, more importantly, the generosity of her partner. Once this contact ceases



to exist, the man remains what he had been before this union, while the woman reverts to her original role of insignificance. It is obvious, then, that Jardiel sees in the sexual act and in the sexual act alone, the sole meaningful relationship between man and woman and, within this relationship, only the woman stands to benefit from it. There are times when Jardiel's hostility assumes incredible proportions. It is difficult to view the act of childbirth in negative terms; yet, through one of the characters already familiar to us, "el doctor Flagg" who first appears in Amor se escribe sin hache, Jardiel shatters even this truly feminine phenomenon, comparing it to a simple case of indigestion. He states that because of the natural aspect of the childbirth process, the pain experienced is often exaggerated. In reality, if anything, childbirth is less painful than a simple indigestion because the woman is aware that the nature of the pain is only temporary and, more importantly, that it will result in a pleasurable experience. Reacting to Federico's remarks that childbirth often causes the death of the mother, Flagg adds: "También hay casos de muerte por caerse en las escaleras del Metro...¿Y es esa una razón para que se les rinda homenaje a todos los ciudadanos que bajan y suben las escaleras del Metro..." (IV, p. 505)

The same theory emphasizing the exaggeration of pain in the process of childbirth reappears in the second part of the novel. This time it is God Himself who expands on it during His address to Humanity: "Como consecuencia del Dolor surge el Placer. Por eso, ¡oídme bien! Por eso es mentira que yo condenara a la mujer a parir sus hijos con Dolor. Es una de tantas leyendas que se me han colgado. Es una de tantas incomprensiones. No, yo no condené a la Mujer a parir con Dolor sus hijos, sino que la hice donación de ese Dolor para proporcionarle el Placer de la maternidad; porque sin el Dolor el Placer no existe." (IV, p. 737)

## CHAPTER IV

### ANTIFEMINIST ELEMENTS IN THE THEATER OF JARDIEL PONCELA

In the "Prólogo" to Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? Jardiel Poncela is on record as having replied to Ruiz-Castillo, director of Biblioteca Nueva, that he was aware that his novels were impregnated with bitter antifeminism and that "...todas las mujeres que aparecen en mis novelas son mujeres desvergonzadas." (IV, p. 794)<sup>38</sup> He added in his reply to Ruiz-Castillo that "...el tipo de mujer honesta 'no me sale'...A lo mejor no he conocido a ninguna que lo fuera." (IV, p. 794) In his essay, Misterio femenino, appearing in his Obra Inédita, Jardiel acknowledges what he had written many years before, but affirms that "...esa rabia se trasluce en mis novelas y no en mi Teatro." (OI, p. 37) Perhaps Jardiel should have stated that what he called "rabia" is handled in a much more superficial way in his theater than in his novels. The sensitivity "sui generis" of the theater-

<sup>38</sup> References to all of Jardiel's plays are from his Obras Completas, 4 vols (Barcelona: Ahr, 1969) and his Obra Inédita (Barcelona, Ahr, 1967). To avoid repetition, these references are indicated in the text enclosed in parentheses.

going public would not have tolerated long dissertations on the troublesome aspect of women which, in addition to being completely unwarranted, were purely of a personal nature. It is true that, in most instances, his plays end happily whereas in his novels women are generally responsible for men's misery and ruin. However, to say that his theater lacks antifeminist elements is a gross exaggeration. Jardiel attempts to justify what he terms a lack of hostility toward women in his plays by stating that "...yo he escrito siempre el teatro de una manera y la novela de otra manera diferente." (OI, p. 37) This, however, has as much validity to prove his point as someone maintaining that the novel and the theater are two separate genres; the fact that they are indeed two separate genres does not mean, in itself, that one or the other is automatically free of certain elements when cultivated by the same writer.

The theater of Jardiel Poncela is unique in that its situations, for the most part, are of an unlikely nature--"inverosímiles." With the exception of early theatrical works most of Jardiel's later theater is based on Surrealism, on "lo irreal" and "lo fantástico." Humor plays an important part in the theater of Jardiel; but unlike many humorists of the period whose interest did

not touch the sad and conscious aspect of life, Jardiel's humor, in the words of Ramón Gómez de la Serna, "...tuvo el delirio de la conciencia cómica, procurando que los lectores abriesen los ojos a un cielo de mayor justicia. Todo eso le llevaba al sarcasmo y al amargor."<sup>39</sup> The characters of Jardiel's plays, like the characters of the Italian Commedia dell'Arte, keep reappearing in play after play--the same characters, but with different names. True to his theory that "...el Teatro se basa en la síntesis y solo raramente llega a rozar el análisis," (II, p. 99) Jardiel's characters are, for the most part, somewhat superficial. They speak, but seldom think. The women, particularly, are certain predictable types, such as the "coqueta" and the adulteress appearing in Angelina o el honor de un brigadier; the overmaterialistic type, appearing in El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros; and the violent type appearing in Blanca por fuera y Rosa por dentro. As in his novels, it is a rare occurrence indeed to meet a feminine character who does not embody at least some mildly negative attributes.

<sup>39</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Retratos completos (Madrid: Aguilar, 1961) p. 1164.

UNA NOCHE DE PRIMAVERA SIN SUEÑO (1927)

When Jardiel Poncela began thinking about writing this play he was already living with Josefina, the woman he identified in Amor se escribe sin hache as "Nez-en-l'air" and who gave him his daughter Evangelina, the first of the four illegitimate children. This period of his life, the beginning of 1926, was a financial disaster for Jardiel and this situation almost resulted in a premature separation from his companion prior to the birth of Evangelina. An unexpected income from short articles and songs, saved, at least temporarily, his union with "Nez-en-l'air," and allowed him enough tranquillity to be able to write his first play, Una noche de primavera sin sueño. The nature of the plot--friction in the conjugal life of Alejandra and Mariano--could hardly be interpreted as purely coincidental. Alejandra is the typical example of the nagging wife, determined to make life miserable for Mariano. When he finally abandons her, completely exasperated and determined never to come back, Alejandra shows all but sadness; on the contrary, in her conversation with Berta, her maid, she confesses that she has never been in love, "...aún no me he enamorado la primera vez..." (I, p. 177) Thus, in effect, she admits that

she does not love her husband. This becomes even clearer upon Valentín's appearance. Entering from the balcony and pretending to have entered into the house by error, Valentín, a complete stranger to Alejandra, makes a strong impression on her. Rather than showing suspicion, she not only displays an interest in him by sending away the maid, but confides in him confessing that she is going to divorce her husband. Indeed, she even hints on the possibility that Valentín might be the man she has been hoping to meet:

ALE.- Acaso...Usted me parece un hombre excepcional. Y yo...¿qué le parezco yo?

VAL.- ¿La verdad? ¿La verdad?

ALE.- La verdad.

VAL.- Me parece usted una mujer sin importancia. (I, p. 183)

Alejandra also proves to be a liar: when Mariano calls her the next day, Valentín, who had spent the night in the apartment, answers the telephone pretending to be the plumber. Alejandra goes along with this story, adding furthermore that no one had come to the house during his absence.

Another indication of Alejandra's conniving nature is given when her mother visits her apartment while Valentín is still there. The excitement and the commotion

that follows is nothing less than some of the more spiced tales narrated by Boccaccio in his Decamerone:

ALE.- ¡Es mi madre! ¡Mi madre, que viene!  
 ¡Dios mío! ¡Escóndase usted! ¡Métase debajo  
 de una cama! ¡Escóndase en el armario!...  
 ¡Tírese por el balcón! ¡Haga usted algo, por  
 Dios! (I, pp. 188-189)

In the final act of the play we are presented with an episode similar to Cervantes' interpolated tale in Don Quijote: the story of the "curioso impertinente." Mariano and Valentín, as we discover, are really good friends and Valentín had agreed to test the strength of Alejandra in an attempt to determine whether she still loved her husband. Unlike the woman in Cervantes' tale who runs away with her husband's best friend, Valentín does not take advantage of the weakness of his friend's wife, though the author leaves no doubt that he could have easily done so.

#### EL CADÁVER DEL SEÑOR GARCÍA (1930)

As in the previous play, we have an indication that a woman is responsible for a man's misery to the point of driving him to attempt suicide. While Hortensia and Abelardo are celebrating their engagement, a shot is



heard and a body is discovered in their apartment. The coroner searches the victim, and finds a suicide note; in it, we learn that a woman is responsible for his action-- a woman with whom he had had a child and who now has decided to marry someone else. The circumstantial similarity to Hortensia and Abelardo's engagement suggests the possibility that Hortensia is the one responsible for the man's presumed death. Displaying a familiar sarcasm, the coroner states: "¿Cómo puede suponer de ella esa infamia? ¡Aunque fuera verdad! ¡Se aguanta uno! Cuando se trata de una mujer así de estupenda...¡se aguanta uno!" (I, p. 264) The sudden revival of the "dead" man and his realization that he had entered into the wrong apartment clears Hortensia but, at the same time, implicates Delfina, a neighbor and friend of Hortensia. To be sure, Delfina displays an unparalleled cynicism while listening impassively and seemingly unconcerned to the accusations being made against her friend, describing her as an unfaithful woman and so cruel as to cause a man's death. Though Delfina recognized the man to be García, her old lover and the father of her son, she does not utter one word to clear the confusion. As long as Delfina believes García to be dead, she feels that no one can identify her and thus point to her as the cause of García's death.

When García suddenly reappears, however, at first she tries to hide, thus showing a cowardly nature; then, once she is presented with the facts, she has no alternative but to confess the truth. It must be pointed out also that, in addition to driving García to seek his death, Delfina had tricked Mirabeu, for whom she had left García, into believing that she was free of compromises and, above all, she had kept hidden from him the fact that she was the mother of a ten year old boy.

MARGARITA, ARMANDO Y SU PADRE (1931)

Whereas in most of the plays written prior to this one Jardiel's hostility toward women manifests itself in a mild form compared to that expressed in his novels, in Margarita, Armando y su padre the author displays the most complete repertoire of antifeminism ever to appear in his theater. There is nothing sacred in this play, and Jardiel spares nothing and no one in attempting to destroy the traditional view not only toward women, but also toward love and the institution of marriage.

The play, obviously inspired by Dumas' characters in La Dame aux camélias (1852), deals mainly with the attempts of a father to prevent his son from marrying.

Unlike other plays of Jardiel, there are several characters through whom his feminine negativism is expressed.

Antoñito and Flora, for instance, give us a prelude of what married life can be like with an overly-materialistic woman. The character of Flora is not new to us; we had the opportunity of seeing some of her more notable features in the characters of Sylvia Brums in Amor se escribe sin hache and Palmera Suaretti, the famous "vedette" in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Flora never allows her husband Antoñito to forget that she "could have" married a rich man. In their frequent and often violent matrimonial squabbles Flora begrudges Antoñito's inability to financially support her whims: "...pero, ¿es que cuando tú me conociste no tenía yo alhajas y vestidos? Vamos..., contesta. ¿Yo no tenía termosifón y aspirador eléctrico?...¿Y vas a negar que don Emilio me había ofrecido comprarme un coche último modelo, con motor silencioso y cristales biselados?" (I, p. 316) Flora's materialism propels her to prostitute herself for money, a fact that other women working with her try to justify on the basis that Antoñito does not provide adequately for her.

Likewise, Luz, who is engaged to Pamplinas, much older than she, consistently betrays him with Manolo.

The bulk of criticism, however, is reserved for Margarita, the heroine of the play. She agrees to live with Armando following his father's refusal to allow their marriage. It is through Pamplinas, Armando's father, that Jardiel expresses his negative view of women and marriage. By prohibiting his son from marrying Margarita, Pamplinas encourages them to live together, at his expense. He feels that living together is the closest that two individuals can be to marriage. He also reasons that it would be senseless to try to separate them because "... si los separásemos por cualquier medio, volverían a unirse, o, por lo menos, se acordarían ya siempre uno de otro..." (I, p. 349) If, on the other hand, they could be encouraged to share the same apartment and the same bed, "...a la vuelta de un año, o de dos, ya no podrán aguantarse..." (I, p. 349)

Pamplinas, of all the characters appearing in previous plays, is the only one who comes the closest to Jardiel's philosophy. He, as Pedro de Valdivia in Pero... ¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, views women only as sexual partners and feels that the union of man and woman for anything other than the gratification of sexual urges should be avoided. Obviously referring to the fact that his son Armando has already been able to seduce Margarita

and that, in spite of this, persists in his idea of marrying her, Pamplinas states: "El fin de la vida es conseguir la felicidad, y cuando la felicidad está conseguida, entonces...entonces sólo nos esforzamos en perderla." (I, p. 349) Pamplinas, as it happens, is correct in his theory; after a short period of time and after the initial erotic fever has vanished, Margarita and Armando grow weary of one another and consequently agree to separate. They do so with the blessings of Pamplinas who warmly welcomes his son back to "sanity," wishing to be the first to congratulate him and suggesting to him that he might have been even a little too kind with Margarita. He states that women, in many ways, are "...como los perros 'lulúes'..." and do not appreciate kind treatment, preferring instead to "...revolcarse en la calle." (I, p. 369)

Margarita and Armando meet again toward the end of the play. Upon learning that he is now married, to Cristiana, Margarita reminds him of his father's earlier warning, namely that "[el] patrimonio es un conjunto de bienes...[mientras que el] matrimonio es un conjunto de males." (I, p. 378) Armando promptly acknowledges this, "reassuring" her that little has changed since then, and that he is just as unhappy now in his marriage as he had

been earlier while living with her.

In the closing lines of the play, Pamplinas himself puts to practice some of his own theories. Discovering that his mistress is betraying him with Antoñito, he very calmly hands him the key to her apartment, wishing him the best of luck.

USTED TIENE OJOS DE MUJER FATAL (1933)

This play is a stage adaptation of the novel, Pero ...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? As in the novel, Jardiel satirizes the don Juan character for his dependence on women. Like Pedro de Valdivia in the novel, Sergio Hernán, the protagonist of the play, is endowed with an irresistible charm when dealing with women, and this quality makes him the most sought-after man in the world. The secret of his success, we are told, is primarily due to his mistreatment of women as well as to his ability to say just the proper word prior to seducing a woman. What distinguishes Sergio from other men is the fact that, once a woman has succumbed to his charm and is seduced, it is absolutely impossible for him ever to show any interest in her again. Due to his "kindness" and "understanding" however, he allows each conquered woman to remain in the household--a harem-like place--

because he "understands" the women's need to be near him at all times, hoping for a reawakening of his interest in them. In agreeing to remain as servants and/or in other capacities in his household, the women do so with the understanding that they will receive no pay for their services. One of these women is Elena, Sergio's latest victim, who had succumbed to his charm following his whispering to her: "Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal." Elena, unlike Vivola Adamant in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? hopes to be treated differently by Sergio but later abandons her hope and leaves the "harem." While Pedro, in the novel version of this play, had not been able to conquer Vivola, Sergio seduces Elena rather easily. His interest in her reawakens only later in the play and it is purely coincidental, while Pedro, in the novel, is constantly obsessed with the idea of not being able to conquer Vivola.

Like most men in Jardiel's plays and novels, Sergio never displays serious considerations toward women, and considers love as a form of slavery. Speaking mainly through Sergio, but at times also through his butler, Jardiel repeats much of the same theories that women should only be taken seriously when they can satisfy one's sexual thirst. Because of the temporary nature of

sexual pleasure, men should immediately abandon women to avoid becoming their slaves. This is precisely the "trap" into which Sergio falls when he seeks to renew his interest in Elena. As in the novel, Sergio is contacted by a group of relatives of a rich old man and he is hired for the purpose of seducing a woman and thus preventing her marriage for money, which would deny the relatives a share of their inheritance upon his death. This woman is, of course, Elena who, incidentally, is the only woman who plays a significant part in this play. All of the other women, in varying degree, reflect the general negative characteristics displayed by other feminine personalities appearing in Jardiel's works.

Upon Sergio's arrival at the old man's house, all women--married and unmarried--are more than inclined to give themselves to him so that he is able to "practice" before playing the real love game with Elena. When the husbands object to Sergio's use of their wives to "practice" his skills, his butler reassures them: "...y qué es el amor más que un deporte en el que el corazón actúa de árbitro..." (I, p. 619) While some of the women, Beatriz and Nina particularly, are flirting with Sergio, stating that "...personalmente es usted mucho más interesante que por referencias..." others are



fighting over who is to have the "first turn" in loving Sergio. Like Pedro de Valdivia in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, Sergio is somewhat uneasy in having to face Elena and, noticing this, his faithful butler reminds him that "...dudar es fracasar...las mujeres y los tranvías hay que tomarlos en marcha..." (I, p. 628)

In much the same manner as in Amor se escribe sin hache, Jardiel reveals through one of the many "offended" husbands, his ideas on the troublesome aspect of women. Commenting on his wife's decision to abandon him, he expresses relief and gratitude to Sergio, with these words: "Treinta años hace, señor Hernán, que aguardo la ocasión de ver a otro ciudadano solvente enamorado de mi esposa y hoy se cumplen, al fin, mis deseos. ¿Usted ama a Adelaida? Pues para usted para siempre. Yo me voy a California, que es un clima ideal. Adiós, amigo Hernán. Mándeme lo que quiera, menos a Adelaida..." (I, pp. 632-633)

Like Vivola Adamant, Elena is moved by a peculiar curiosity to see Sergio since he had grown a beard. When he confesses his love for her, she makes fun of him by confessing that what moved her to come to him was not love but simply the curiosity of seeing his beard. She

states: "¡El amor! ¡Qué terrible que los filósofos hayan invertido siglos enteros en analizar los sentimientos que mueven en mundo para llegar a la conclusión de que da igual un amor que una barba!" (I, p. 646) This is to say, in effect, that women react to peculiar instincts or, as the butler interprets it: "...al hombre le mueve la ambición y a la mujer la curiosidad." (I, p. 647)

When the play ends, it appears that Elena has achieved her purpose and that Sergio, in allowing himself to fall in love with her, has reached the highest level of "imbecilidad"--"imbécil elevado al cubo," as Jardiel would define it. If there is a victor, it is certainly Elena because she has been able not only to secure Sergio for herself, but, more importantly, she has been able to extract from him the promise that he will forever abandon the role of a seducer, beginning a new life completely dedicated to her.

#### ANGELINA O EL HONOR DE UN BRIGADIER (1934)

Of all the previous stage works of Jardiel Poncela, Angelina o el honor de un brigadier is perhaps the most traditional in terms of both theme and style. It is one of the very few plays written in verse form and which

deals with traditional nineteenth century themes. To be sure, the play is not entirely lacking in unpredictable elements which make Jardiel's theater unique. We have, for example, the phantasmagoric appearance of don Marcial's parents, dead long ago, who assist him in deciding the course of action to be taken regarding his wife infidelity. Nor do we lack, of course, Jardiel's perennial antifeminist tone, which is generously distributed among all of the feminine characters. The author's introductory remarks serve as a perfect portrait of the two principal heroines:

ANGELINA.

...Soy una muchacha honrada  
que no se entera de nada  
y que por eso es feliz;  
pero, claro, al fin, mujer,  
soy un poquito coqueta...  
Tengo un novio que es poeta,  
y un papá, que es brigadier. (I, pp. 393-394)

The mother, Marcela, is not only guilty of adultery, but she almost causes Germán's death. This is how she introduces herself:

MARCELA.

Yo soy su madre...Una dama  
que por amor e imprudencia  
es la culpable del drama.  
Dulce y suave en la apariencia,  
no tolero una influencia  
que me guíes y me dirija.

Y tengo más experiencia  
y más años que mi hija. (I, p. 394)

Indeed, she does have considerable more experience than her daughter Angelina, but this does not stop her from betraying her husband, don Marcial, with Germán who is half her age and could well be her son. A sarcastic young man, Germán has a certain similarity with Mario Esfarcíes in ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía! Reacting to don Marcial's accusations that young men of today do not behave like lovers of his times, Germán points out laughingly:

Pero, háganos el honor,  
don Marcial, de suponer  
que huimos de la mujer  
para evitar el dolor. (I, p. 412)

It is not "dolor" however, that compels Germán to terminate his relationship with Marcela, but simple boredom as well as a newly acquired interest in her daughter, Angelina. Like her mother, Angelina is not the personification of virtue and she does not hesitate at all in agreeing to run away with Germán, even though she is officially engaged to Rodolfo. Soon after deserting Rodolfo, Angelina reveals herself for what she really is: a spoiled and egocentric creature, willing to indulge

herself in illicit love to fulfill her sexual desires as long as she is materially comfortable; but when her comfort appears threatened, she does not hesitate to leave Germán, attributing her decision to the fact that she still loves Rodolfo. She states:

...pues busqué un edéd  
 en tu mentir seductor  
 y ahora veo que mi amor  
 era mentira también! (I, p. 458).

In a traditionally written play such as this one, it was inevitable that don Marcial would feel "manchado de deshonorra" on account of German's seduction of his daughter and would, consequently, challenge him to a duel. In the ensuing duel, Germán falls seriously wounded while Marcela's overreaction betrays her has his lover, a fact that, in spite of unmistakable evidence, she falsely denies. As for don Marcial, we note an understandable change in his attitude with regard to today's youth whom he had earlier described as "...jóvenes de otra casta//que ni enamoran siquiera." (I, p. 411) Rather, we find a much familiar attitude--an embittered attitude--directed against both women and love:

Dichas y amor de mujer  
 engañosos como el mar

¡cuánta dulzura al mirar!  
 ¡cuánto amargor al beber! (I, p. 510)

The same bitter attitude is displayed by Rodolfo who listens to Angelina's cynical version of what prompted her to run away with Germán:

¡Pero tienes que escucharme  
 antes de dejarme sola!  
 Te aseguro que al raptarme  
 Germán me obligó a marcharme  
 empuñando una pistola. (I, p. 528)

Noticing his skepticism, she adds:

Ese Germán es un golfo  
 sin pizca de dignidad.  
 Ayer, cuando me raptaba,  
 en tanto que yo clamaba  
 inútilmente en la noche,  
 él me agarró por el pelo,  
 y, a la rastra, por el suelo,  
 así me llevó hasta el coche.  
 Y para que no gritara  
 y le espantase la caza,  
 me puso, como mordaza,  
 un pañuelo por la cara. (I, p. 528)

### UN ADULTERIO DECENTE (1935)

As the title implies, the play deals with the unfaithfulness of a woman, Fernanda, who, according to the description given of her "...es una mujer de edad indefinible: como la mayor parte de las mujeres; quiere decirse

que por la mañana, al saltar del lecho, representa treinta años; a las dos de la tarde, en días de sol, veintiocho; a las seis, ya arreglada para salir, veintiséis; de noche, sin maquillar veinticinco, y de noche, maquillada, veintitrés." (I, p. 677) The manner in which she betrays her husband, Eduardo, makes her adultery a "decent" one because she tells Federico, her lover, that her husband is dead. Eduardo, upon returning home unexpectedly one day, surprises Federico making himself comfortably at home and discovers his wife's infidelity. Both Eduardo and Federico feel betrayed so that each of them seeks the understanding of the other. Federico, as might be expected, tries to minimize the importance of the situation by commenting on the nature of women, equaling them to books to be written. He states: "...las mujeres, Eduardo, son libros en blanco; siguen en blanco hasta que se enamoran de un hombre, y entonces ese hombre 'las escribe.' Una vez 'escritas,' las leen otros." (I, p. 692) In the opinion of Federico, therefore, Fernanda is a "book" written in close collaboration by both he and Eduardo. Additional antifeminist elements are introduced in the play by the absent-minded doctor Cumberri, who theorizes that adultery is a "virus" known as "adulter-coco" and that, as Melecio subsequently points out, must

be caused mainly by marriage. As a cure for this "virus" Cumberri recommends that they spend some time in the hospital; it is there that we are introduced to hundreds of people, all suffering from this common "virus" contracted, in some instances, during the couple's honeymoon. The boredom of the hospital proves to be too much for the three; Eduardo tries and finally succeeds in escaping. By refusing to undergo Cumberri's treatment, Eduardo elects to remain married to Fernanda and, consequently, destined to remain a perennial cuckold. Federico, on the other hand, decides to write a play, but, alluding to his problems with Fernanda, he remarks that "...una mujer te inspirará una obra de arte, pero no te dejará realizarla." (I, p. 730) Fernanda is literally bored to tears and repeats constantly Eduardo's name while, at the same time, demanding aspirin, a reaction which, according to Cumberri, is entirely justified but "...uno y otra hay que dárselo en dosis...Déjala que llore; en las mujeres el llanto dura poco; por eso usan unos pañuelos tan pequeños." (I, p. 734)

As it ensues, Cumberri's cure has a positive effect, at least as far as Eduardo is concerned. Ordering Eduardo to spend the night with his wife in an attempt to verify whether the "interés material" still existed, Cumberri



absent-mindedly points to his nurse's bedroom. Eduardo's satisfaction in emerging from the nurse's room next morning seems to indicate his approval for and his willingness to continue the cure to offset his wife's "virus" should it become chronic.

### LAS CINCO ADVERTENCIAS DE SATANÁS (1935)

This play is, in many respects, much similar to Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal, particularly the first act. As in the earlier work, we have a treatment of the don Juan theme. Félix, the male protagonist, displays what must be considered a suspiciously similar attitude with regard to women as the author himself. Like Jardiel, Félix is in constant search for the ideal woman, a search which thrusts him from one woman to another and which always results in the renunciation of the woman under the pretense that she does not conform to his rigid standards. Unlike the characters of other plays, Félix's affairs with women are handsomely paid in cash. When the time comes for him to rid himself of a woman, his friend Ramón assumes the responsibility, receiving, in return, proper payment from Félix. This unusual understanding is viewed rather matter-of-factly by Ramón who explains

to Félix's butler that a "used" woman is no different than used items of clothing: "...en mujeres y en corbatas tu amo y yo tenemos las mismas preferencias. La mujer y la corbata que él desea son siempre la corbata y la mujer que deseo yo. Sólo que yo no tengo dinero y él sí. Y como por poco que cuesten las mujeres y las corbatas siempre cuestan algo, tu amo puede darse la satisfacción de tenerlas nuevas y yo me veo obligado a aguardar a que me las traspase." (I, p. 767)

Félix attributes his failures with women--his inability to find the ideal woman--to the fact that women lack an understanding of their "oficio" which is "...la seducción constante." He adds, furthermore, that "...las mujeres se quejan de que los hombres nos cansamos de ellas sin pensar en que conquistan por seducción y en que si no mantienen lo conquistado es porque a lo largo de los días dejan de ser seductoras. (I, p. 776)

Women, Félix feels, are like strange countries and unknown frontiers which at first capture the imagination of the traveler compelling him to explore them. Each country, like a woman, is fascinating to visit and to discover in its various mysterious aspects and points of interest. At first, the immediate reaction is to wish to inhabit this country permanently, "...pero luego,

conocido a fondo, se le descubre su semejanza con el anterior, su falta de misterio y de interés y se dice uno: 'tampoco es esta la tierra de promisión'..." (I, p. 778)

In the play, Félix, unable to find happiness in women and love, denies himself the primary means of meeting women: traveling. In so doing, he seems to admit that happiness and peace of mind are incompatible with women and love and, therefore, he must do without both. To add to Félix's troubles, the devil appears warning him of a tragedy which is to befall him in the near future. The tragedy will manifest itself during the course of five events. First, he will meet a woman; he will fall irremediably in love with her; she will create friction between Félix and his friend Ramón; he will regret falling in love with her, and will be forced to give her up to Ramón. These four initial warnings materialize. Félix falls in love with Coral, and after considerable conflict with Ramón, he succeeds in conquering her; however, he discovers that Coral is really his daughter and consequently he is forced to abandon her to Ramón. As for the fifth warning which is to complete the tragedy, nine months later a son is born--the culmination of the tragedy.

UN MARIDO DE IDA Y VUELTA (1939)

With Cuatro corazones con freno y marcha atrás, Angelina o el honor de un brigadier and Las cinco advertencias de Satanás, Jardiel completes, with Un marido de ida y vuelta, the realization and practical application of his theatrical credo. Free from the economic instability which so often was responsible for compromising his creative skill as a playwright, Jardiel was now able not only to write as he pleased, but also to select the theater in which to stage his works. This play, like the three immediately preceding, is rich in surrealistic elements which, along with the masterful application of humor to each and every situation, and the imaginative treatment and development of the plot, makes it one of the most successful ever staged by Jardiel: it ran for one hundred consecutive performances. The play deals with the conjugal conflicts of Pepe and Leticia which result, eventually, in Pepe's premature death due to heart failure and the subsequent marriage of Leticia to her former husband's best friend, Paco. From the beginning, we are aware that Leticia is determined to make life miserable for Pepe by acting consistently the reverse of his expectations. She is described by her husband as a woman

who "...si las cosas ya no tienen remedio y se la quiere, hay que aguantarla. Y si no se la quiere y las cosas tienen todav a remedio, hay que huirla." (I, p. 1132) She keeps a diary, but, as we learn, not for her own use, but so that everyone might read it when she, very "conveniently" neglects to put it away. It is, in fact, through her diary that we realize Leticia's romantic involvement with Paco. Contrary to what one might expect, Pepe, her husband, is not at all disturbed upon discovering her unfaithfulness; rather, he calmly and affectionately warns Paco of her shortcomings: "Leticia es infantil, incongruente, vanidosa, presumida y tiene un concepto falso de todas las cosas. Desde ya tiempo le ha dado por decir que yo no la comprendo y coquetea con todo el que se le pone a tiro..." (I, p. 1131)

Pepe knows that his heart condition will not permit him to live much longer, and he is concerned about a possible future marriage between Paco and Leticia. His concern lies mainly in the fact that he would not want to be, however indirectly, the cause of his friend's unhappiness. His warnings on this point, therefore, are very straight-forward:

...!Ojo! Si no quieres ser desgraciado, no te cases con ella. Agotado el capitalito del seguro que voy a dejarla, Leticia te obligar a a

trabajar como a un negro para subvenir a gastos enormes: y luego se quejaría de que estabas todo el día trabajando y de que no la hacías ningún caso. Te volvería tarumba con caprichos absurdos y con incongruencias constantes...Cada conversación con Leticia te dejaría atontado, jadeante y con tal dolor de cabeza, que pronto te convertirías, como yo, en un virtuoso de la aspirina. De pronto, un buen día, ella caería en la cuenta de que no la comprendías...(I, p. 1135).

When Pepe dies of a heart attack, Paco ignores Pepe's warnings; he marries Leticia and his troubles begin. Within a short time, she exhausts both the capital left to her in her former husband's life insurance policy, as well as Paco's own capital. Then, when Pepe reappears as a ghost, Leticia confesses that she had married Paco simply because she was aware of Pepe's warnings to Paco not to marry her, and because "...[una] fuerza invencible me ha llevado siempre a hacer justamente aquello que se me prohíbes." (I, p. 1182)

#### EL AMOR SÓLO DURA 2.000 METROS (1941)

There are two aspects of antifeminism which are treated with equal prominence in this play. Through Patricia Barret, mother of the heroine, Annie Barret, the author unveils some of his bitterest attacks on motherhood,

and by means of heated arguments between Annie and her Spanish husband, Julio, the author reveals his contempt for a woman who competes professionally with a man. And who better than an American girl, with her independence and drive, could have better portrayed the role of this woman?

The play deals with the surprise marriage of a famous Spanish author with a world-renowned Hollywood actress, a marriage which, from its beginning, was inevitably destined to end in failure. As a famous star, Annie Barret is described as a woman "profundamente vanidosa...[que] la lleva, a veces, a afectar una sencillez extremada." (II, p. 51) Furthermore, her fame as a star presupposes that she be endowed with "un temperamento caprichoso hasta el absurdo." (II, p. 51) Her thirst for power is matched in intensity only by "...[su] amor al dinero." (II, p. 51) In complete contrast to Annie, Julio Santillana, her husband, "tiene un temperamento extremado, un corazón ardiente y una imaginación vertiginosa...un amor propio exacerbado, provisto de ideas muy firmes..." (II, p. 52) As for Patricia Barret, she is a woman who "...como su hija, o seguramente más...dedica el sesenta por ciento de sus ingresos al tocador." (II, p. 98) Whatever talent Annie has for impersonating different characters

as well as "su capacidad de fingimiento" she must have inherited it directly from her mother.

Annie's first indication that she considers her marriage secondary to her career is given while answering her agent's disapproving remarks concerning her recent wedding:

SLATER.- Ha sido un mal negocio y puede ser su ruina.

ANNIE.- (Dominada ya por los razonamientos de Slater.) Pero, Slater, podemos negar mi matrimonio y mantenerlo oculto. (II, p. 68)

When, on account of her marriage, the Studio begins pressuring Annie to at least exploit her marriage with Julio, an internationally famous figure himself, for propaganda purposes, she readily gives in despite her husband's protests:

JULIO.- ¿Qué está usted diciendo? ¿Nuestro matrimonio explotado para la propaganda?...

ANNIE.- Es un recurso legal, Julio...(II, p. 102)

Annie is unmoved by Julio's attempts to cope with her complicated schedule, even at the point of being unappreciative. When Julio shows his willingness to compromise with his wife's wish to continue her career by even preparing her meals, she ignores him and snaps: "Bueno, Julio. Déjame. Ahora no tengo tiempo de



ocuparme de la comida." (II, p. 119)

As in other plays of Jardiel, in El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros we have the inevitable general attacks on women, brought about by no specific cause, as well as the same negative attitude of minimizing their importance. We also have the typical view of Jardiel about marriage and how it contributes to man's misery and ruin. The character through whom Jardiel manifests these already familiar attitudes is Martín, Julio's secretary. When Julio confides in Martín, confessing his unhappiness in his marriage with Annie, Martín is quick to point out that Annie is not a creature to be married to anyone; rather, she belongs to a special class of women, and "... con éstas no debe uno más que divertirse. Tú has hecho al revés, y pagas las consecuencias." (II, p. 122)

If Jardiel had few kind words for Annie, he harbours even less sympathy for Patricia, her mother. An incredibly materialistic woman, Patricia visits her daughter not on account of a motherly concern nor by a wish to congratulate her on the occasion of her marriage; she comes, rather, for purely selfish motives. She abruptly rejects Annie's embrace protesting: "Annie, niña, ten cuidado... Me chafas siempre la ropa;...¿Qué me has traído? Como si lo viera, trapos. Nunca acabarás de comprender que sólo

se coloca sólidamente el dinero que se invierte en joyas...¡Cuánto me he acordado de tí!..¡Paso tantos apuros económicos cuando tú no me ayudas!.. (II, p. 98)

Completely stunned by this unexpected display of egotism, Julio listens incredulously while Patricia enumerates some of her latest "apuros económicos":

Invertí un dineral en unas acciones de petróleo de Tulsa, y luego ha resultado que en Tulsa ya no hay petróleo. Luego, en el "Club de Damas Nacidas en Julio" abrieron una suscripción y tuve que dar quinientos dólares; ya ves, ni siquiera pude saber para quién era la suscripción, porque sólo se lo decían a los que daban de mil dólares para arriba. Además, llevo una temporada inverosímil de póquer: ¡desde que te fuiste no he logrado ligar ni una escalera! ¡Y el perfume que me recomendó Jane Smith cuesta ciento cincuenta dólares frasco, Annie! Por si fuera poco, en las carreras no acierto ni por casualidad: y ayer, que apunté al favorito, se rompió una pata en la última vuelta. ¡Y es que está la vida muy cara, Annie!...(Llora) ¡Muy cara! (II, p. 99)

Having finally obtained from her daughter what she had hoped for--more money--Patricia heads for the door and has to be reminded that she has not yet met Annie's husband. When she does, her immediate reaction is that Julio, contrary to tradition, should not consider her as a mother, "...[porque] no quisiera tener hijos tan viejos..." (II, p. 100)

In the final scenes of the play, it is an embittered

and sarcastic Julio who, echoing Jardiel's attitudes on the illusion of love--a love which only lasts the length of a film, 2000 meters--proposes a toast celebrating his departure from the United States, which symbolically, represents also a departure from marriage: "...Por el cine que triunfa dirigiéndose a los más ignorantes. Por el dinero como aspiración suprema de la vida. Por los amores que sólo duran 2.000 metros. Por los hombres divorciados y casados varias veces. Por las mujeres sin valor para obedecer las órdenes del corazón y de la conciencia. Por la damas que forman "Clubs" y juegan al póquer..." (II, p. 147)

#### MADRE (EL DRAMA PADRE) (1942)

This play, defined by Jardiel as a caricature of modern melodrama, represents another attempt to experiment with the theater of the absurd. The action of the play revolves around preparations for the marriage of two sets of quadruplets whose joy on the day of their wedding is shattered by the news they received after the wedding ceremony had taken place that they are really brothers and sisters. A series of revelations concerning the true mothers and fathers of these children only succeeds

in complicating the situation more and more. When the newly married couples decide to leave for their honeymoon and to consummate their marriage, they do so in spite of the fact that they have been unable to determine who their real parents are.

Because of the immoral tone present throughout the play, it was censured and, for a short time, its performance was prohibited throughout Spain. Jardiel attributed the censuring of Madre (el drama padre) to the obtuseness of the critics and to their inability to interpret this play as an attempt to caricaturize what he truly considered an immoral theater, "...una clase de teatro efectivamente inmoral y resueltamente idiota, que acaparaba los escenarios y la atención del público..." (II, p. 286)

While the improbability of the plot cannot be doubted, the fact remains that this play, as others before this, reveals the same hostility toward women, a hostility which cannot be discounted simply on the basis of the unlikelihood of events. There are two characters through whom Jardiel manifests his antifeminism: Maximina and, though on a smaller scale, Obdulia. Maximina, as the mother of the female quadruplets, is a remarkably materialistic woman who, in spite of her wealth, is often

seized by fits of laughter whenever the subject of money arises. She usually remains in such a state as long as the conversation persists on the same subject or, as Obdulia states, "...cuando se convence de que no tiene que dar dinero." (II, p. 303) In addition to her excessive materialismo, Maximina is an extremely vain woman and, like Sylvia Brums in Amor se escribe sin hache, she forces to submission any man who shows any interest in her. Perhaps the name more suitable for Maximina is that given to her by her brother, "[la] vampiresa oficial del Barrio de Pozas." (II, p. 300) Her principal victim in the play is Jerónimo who is madly in love with her but who is continuously rejected. He works as a servant in the household without pay because, as he confesses, "...no he podido renunciar...a verla a diario..." (II, p. 300) At the end of the play we also learn that, among other things, Maximina has been unfaithful to her husband, a fact made known by the family physician who maintains: "...los cuatro niños gemelos que Maximina había tenido un año antes no pudieron ser hijos de su marido. Esos cuatro niños, así como el que murió al nacer el año siguiente, fueron hijos, indudablemente, de Jerónimo Armengol." (II, p. 382)

Likewise, Obdulia is shown to be a conniving woman

when she confesses that she had an affair with Maximina's husband, Federico, and that the latter, not Florencio, as he has been led to believe, is the real father of her children.

BLANCA POR FUERA Y ROSA POR DENTRO (1943)

This play deals with episodes in the lives of a married couple--Ramiro and Blanca--and their continuous marital arguments generated mainly by Blanca's violent temper. The other principal character of this play, Héctor, had been married to Blanca's sister, Rosa, who, unlike her sister, was a gentle person who died in a train mishap. From the very beginning it is possible to picture the violent aspect that the play is to assume. When the curtain is raised, the scene facing the audience consists of a room with all the furniture, paintings, and mirrors completely shattered. Later, we learn that Blanca is responsible for this. She is an extremely violent woman and although at first there is no discernible evidence which even remotely accounts for her behavior, we learn later that her violent fits are caused by unsatisfied sexual desire. She seeks to fulfill her sexual urge by trying to establish a relationship with her

brother-in-law, Héctor. Her husband, Ramiro, is aware of his wife's interest in Héctor, and wishes subconsciously to rid himself of her, thus displaying much of the same attitudes of Arencibia in Amor se escribe sin hache. In fact, when Héctor expresses his intention to leave Spain for South America, Ramiro does not hide his jealousy: "... ¡Quién fuera tú, Héctor! Salir de casa solo...Tomar un taxi solo...Meterse en un barco solo...y bajar en un país donde poder vivir solo..." (II, p. 1325)

In addition to being of a violent temperament and, in appearance, potentially capable of betraying her husband, Blanca is also untruthful and cynic, pretending to appear to others a loving and submissive wife. Making her first appearance and observing Ramiro talking to Héctor, she shrewdly manipulates the conversation while attempting to explain the scratches she had inflicted on Ramiro's face during their latest fight: "...Ramiro y yo coincidimos en todo y estamos siempre de acuerdo, como sabes. (A Ramiro, afectuosamente.) ¿Qué tal, querido? ¿Cómo has pasado la tarde? ¿Dónde has estado? Pero no me digas más: has estado afeitándote, y como de costumbre te has dado dos o tres tajos en la cara. Un día te vas a degollar." (II, p. 1326)

Like most of the women appearing in Jardiel's works,

Blanca is an exceedingly materialistic woman as well as an incurable spendthrift. During one of the frequent arguments with her husband, she reacts bitterly to Ramiro's reluctance in buying her a new fur since she had just bought one only six months earlier. Insisting that it had been five years, she looks for sympathy toward Héctor, stating that "...medio año que he llevado yo puesta la piel, y cuatro años y medio, por lo menos, que la llevó el zorro, suman cinco." (II, p. 1333)

In the second act a peculiar transformation occurs in the character of Blanca. On her way to Algeciras by train following one of the more serious scuffles with Ramiro, the train derails and in the mishap Blanca is suddenly changed into a kind-hearted, good natured and loving woman, displaying the same virtues possessed by her late sister, Rosa. However, this change is just temporary, and even under the newly acquired veil of gentleness, she presents serious problems for Ramiro. Symbolically, just as the old Blanca was unable to display warm feelings toward Ramiro on account of her violent temper and lack of love for him, the new Blanca also displays an indifference for Ramiro since, having assumed a new personality--Rosa's personality--the object of her love is no longer Ramiro, but Héctor, whom Rosa loved



dearly. The kindness displayed by Blanca toward her husband on one hand is offset by her excessive interest toward Héctor on the other; consequently, it plays no appreciable part in solving Ramiro's predicament. This might also explain Ramiro's unconcerned attitude upon learning that Blanca had regained her own personality.

The only other female character of any significance is Mónica, "el ama de llaves." Though not a hateful character, Mónica is nevertheless portrayed as a woman who is completely ~~un~~aware of what goes on around her--a complete idiot--unable to remember even her own name. A brief passage will suffice to illustrate her stupidity:

RAMIRO.- (A Mónica) Bueno; trae coñac para tres, Mónica.

MÓNICA.- Sí, señor. Ahora mismo... ¡Voy ahora mismo! Porque como no vaya ahora mismo se me olvida lo que tengo de traer ahora mismo... Whisky, ¿verdad?

RAMIRO.- Pero, ¿cómo whisky? ¡Coñac, Mónica! ¡Coñac!

CAMILO.- Iré yo con ella, porque si no trae lejía... (II, p. 1326)

Like Blanca, Mónica also undergoes a change following the train's derailment; but as in the case of Blanca, the change from an extremely stupid woman to an unusually alert and intelligent one, blessed with a photographic memory, is only temporary and it is probably meant to

express the author's conviction that intelligence in a woman is only a short-lived dream--an illusion.

TÚ Y YO SOMOS TRES (1945)

This play constituted a departure from the norm when it was staged because instead of the usual three acts or even four, there are only two acts and one "entreacto." Jardiel felt that, as in the cinema, it is neither necessary nor desirable to break the continuity of the story with too many intermissions.

Jardiel qualifies Tú y yo somos tres as a "comedia psicológica" mainly because of its play on words and because of its absolute "inverosimilitud." For the first time in his theater, Jardiel mixes elements of the Italian Commedia dell'Arte introducing puppet-like characters, pantomime, parody, etc.

The main character, Manuelita, is married by proxy to Rodolfo whom she had never seen; she is therefore ignorant of the fact that he and his brother Adolfo are Siamese twins. Upon learning of this, she tries to commit suicide but fails in her attempt and is rescued.

The author presents two brothers united not only physically but also intellectually and psychologically.

Their separation as a result of an operation is only successful to the extent that each is now physically free to go his own way; however, they are still bound together by their intellectual and psychological dependency on each other which makes it impossible for one to complete a sentence without the other. This situation not only brings about frustrations, mainly on the part of Rodolfo who is married to Manuelita, but it presents some of the most hilariously comic situations in any of Jardiel Poncela's plays.

As for the amorous situation, there is a lack of that bitter antagonism displayed by the author on other occasions; however, as subtle and as mild as it might appear at first, we do have certain elements of an anti-feminist nature. The author portrays Manuelita as a woman desperately seeking to marry someone--the first man who comes along: "...desde los quince años vistiéndome y peinándome con arreglo a las indicaciones del "Vogue". Desde los quince años consultando pitonisas y teniendo faquires a sueldo. Desde los quince años exhibiéndome en fiestas, bailes, estrenos...Desde los quince años levantándome por la mañana dispuesta a enamorar a alguien y acostándome por la noche sin haber enamorado a nadie; porque lo he tenido siempre todo, que ya ve usted que soy guapa y

elegante y con un corazón que es un lanzallamas...¡pero nunca he tenido gancho, caballero! ¡Nunca he tenido gancho! (II, p. 634)

When Manuelita is finally able to find someone willing to be "hooked" in the person of Rodolfo, the mere fact that he lives in Chile and that she has never seen him before does not deter her. She shrewdly handles the problem of distance by forcing a marriage "por procura" to avert any possible change of heart by the bridegroom to be. The fact that she is able to maneuver Rodolfo into marrying her in spite of his understandable reservations is well documented when Manuelita herself admits that "Rodolfo...acogió la idea con bastante reservas... Pero tanto le insistí que, al fin, accedió..." (II, pp. 637-638) Upon discovering Rodolfo's physical handicap--his dependency on his brother and viceversa--Manuelita attempts to kill herself but she, very conveniently, fails to do so. When she is rescued and regains consciousness, she expresses shock at herself for having tried to commit suicide, reassuring everyone present "...que no incurriré en semejante pecado mortal..." Then, showing complete disregard and unconcern for Rodolfo, she turns toward her parrot stating: "... No volveré a darte un susto como el que hoy te he dado, Manolete!" (II, p. 640)

COMO MEJOR ESTÁN LAS RUBIAS ES CON PATATAS (1947)

One of the most humorous of Jardiel's Plays, Como mejor están las rubias es con patatas met with some hostility when it was staged. The play deals with the supposed return to Madrid of a famous anthropologist who, after fifteen years presumed dead in an African jungle, had been found alive by a group of Australian explorers. As in most of his later plays, the antifeminist theme is mildly treated by Jardiel. However, most of the female characters, as customary, display varying degrees of negativism. Albertina, wife of Ulises, the anthropologist, as might be expected, is now remarried to Bernardo and the news of her first husband's return is rather distressing to her. She rejects the idea that, legally, she is still married to Ulises; in doing so, she betrays her true nature by downgrading her first husband, while, all through her present marriage to Bernardo, she had nothing but praises for him. When Albertina discovers that Ulises has become "antropófago" and that, on account of this, he has to be kept caged like an animal, she displays a remarkable ignorance by failing to understand the meaning of "antropófago." Speaking to her daughter, she suggests to her that, out of respect for her father, she too should

become "antropófoga" since "...al fin y al cabo, no es mucho esfuerzo, y una muchacha tan jóven y tan linda como tú todo está bien visto..." (II, p. 1141) Her initial negative reaction upon learning that her husband had been found alive and that her marriage to Bernardo is automatically annulled gives way to a more selfish reaction. Informed that Ulises was coming home locked in a cage, she states: "...dentro de mi tragedia, llevo la ventaja de que a ese marido me lo traen en una jaula...¡Que ninguna mujer del mundo ha conseguido nunca tener el marido así! (II, p. 1132) In so doing, Albertina displays some of the same attitudes manifested earlier by Sylvia Brums in Amor se escribe sin hache regarding her wish to find not a husband but a slave.

Regarding her husband and the fact that he was considered by all as "[un] cafre," Albertina considers herself fortunate to have a cage in which she can keep him, "...sobre todo considerando las muchísimas mujeres que tienen un cafre por marido y no tienen, en cambio, jaula donde meterlo." (II, p. 1132)

Other women who play a significant role in the play do not rate any better treatment by the author. Tula, Albertina's daughter, seldom appears in significant situations; but when she does, she is revealed precisely

for what she is, "...una muchacha muy mona, monísima; tan mona, tan sumamente mona, tan extraordinariamente mona, que, como era de temer, es tonta perdida..." (II, p. 1093)

The roles of Melania, "la portera" and Dionisia, her daughter, are not more eviable than the others. The Andalusian dialect with which they express themselves is obviously meant to be degrading and indicative of their ignorance. Furthermore, both mother and daughter are pictured as exploitative women who see the peculiarity of Albertina's situation as a unique opportunity to make money charging admission to individuals wishing to see the anthropologist's family.

Other women appearing in this play neither add to nor detract from the antifeminist element, with the exception of Liliana who had come to avenge the death of her brother, presumed dead on account of the anthropologist's irresponsibility. Liliana appears on the scene and brandishes a revolver any time things do not go her way. In addition, she expresses herself with a mixture of badly spoken English, French, Italian and Spanish, which accentuates even more her presumptuousness. The play ends unexpectedly when we learn that the man believed to be Ulises is really Melania's husband who had abandoned

her fifteen years earlier because of her domineering nature and had now returned seeking to appropriate himself of a sum of money paid by Ulises's insurance company to anyone who found the missing anthropologist. Reacting to her husband's reappearance, Melania vows never to open the cage and to keep both her husband and his friend, who was in on the scheme, locked-in "...hasta que pien a dúo." (II, p. 1180)



## CONCLUSIONS

Through the years, in Spain, many writers have manifested varying critical attitudes concerning women and their role in society. By and large, most writers have considered women as natural companions to men; some authors, however, have assumed distinctly antifeminist and even misogynous attitudes in their works.

In twentieth century Spain, one of these writers is Enrique Jardiel Poncela (1901-1952). The fervor with which this author displayed his hostility toward women leaves little doubt that antifeminism is the leitmotiv which characterizes most of his works. From his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache (1928) to his last, La "tournee" de Dios (1932), the antifeminist element is his most consistent theme. None of the women appearing in these novels escapes the bitter attacks of our author. Sylvia Brums, the protagonist of Amor se escribe sin hache is the classic example of a vain woman, who, in addition to her other qualities of being unfaithful, lustful and overly materialistic is perhaps the most hateful of all the women appearing in his works. Palmera Suaretti, the famous "vedette" in ¡Espérame en

Siberia, vida mía!, appears nothing short of a prostitute, willing to "sell" herself to the highest bidder. Vivola Adamant, in Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, is the female version of the don Juan type, a woman incapable of displaying affection under any circumstances. Finally, Natalia Lorzain, in La "tournee" de Dios, aside from being conniving to the extent of pretending to be what she is not in order to achieve selfish goals, places her career above her role as a mother, thus causing, indirectly, the death of her son.

The same antifeminist tendency which characterized the novels is also discernible, though on a lesser scale, in Jardiel's theater. In his essay, Misterio femenino, the author attempts to justify the antifeminist tone of his works by explaining that only the novels manifest this hostility and that his theater is free from it. However, results of the study of thirteen plays treated in Chapter IV reveal that this contention is not valid. It is true that in his plays, more than in his novels, the antifeminist element is more likely to be overlooked because it is treated with masterful "pinceladas humorísticas." However, careful analysis of his plays in light of his autobiographical sketches reveals that most of his feminine characters are faithful to certain of the

author's antifeminist preconceptions. Jardiel tried to hide his negative attitude toward women under a Pirandellian mask; however, his jibes and attacks on women are consistent throughout his works. Far from appearing to be innocent and inconsequential then, in reality, substantiate analysts' theories on the nature of wit. As Sigmund Freud maintained, obscene wit is often a substitute for overt sexual activity and hostile wit is a substitute for direct physical or verbal expression of hostility. In view of this, there can be little doubt that Jardiel's treatment of female vices in his plays do contain, indeed, undercurrents of seriousness. We are faced, thus, with strong criticism for the professional woman competing with her husband, as well as bitter attacks on motherhood, both manifested in El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros; we see innumerable women engaged in adulterous relations in Angelina o el honor de un brigadier, in Un adulterio decente and, above all, in Madre (el drama padre) which was even censured because it was considered to be immoral. In Margarita, Armando y su padre, as well as in Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal and Las cinco advertencias de Satanás, the author satirizes not only those who hold women in high esteem, but also the institution of marriage.

The lack of a complete biographical study of Jardiel Poncela makes any attempt to determine the underlying causes of his antifeminism a very intricate and painstaking task. Several possible explanations were explored in Chapter II of this study. While the influence of past and present literature must always be considered, the characters, rather than perpetuating old types appear to be original creations resulting from Jardiel's peculiarly imaginative creativity.

One explanation for this hostility might be sexual guilt. This guilt, which in men has its beginnings in early childhood experiences with the mother, is generally considered to be the underlying factor responsible for the expression of antifeminism. From some of Jardiel's autobiographical sketches we can determine that his mother exercised a strong influence over him--an influence he rejected outright. Furthermore, there are records indicating that he sought the advice of a psychoanalyst and that the possibility of the existence of an Oedipus complex was clearly indicated. We may justifiably interpret that his Oedipus complex was a motivating factor impelling Jardiel to proceed in his futile search for "la mujer cúbica" or "la mujer interior."

The patriarchal aspect of Spanish society may also

have contributed in giving Jardiel a negative attitude toward women. Most men would choose not to be in competition with women. Since the motives for such an attitude are too selfish to be admitted, Jardiel chooses to rationalize these motives by portraying his female characters in negative fashion.

Throughout his works, Jardiel has consistently ridiculed women on the basis of their natural inferiority to men. Likewise, he has directed frequent attacks against those women who rebel against the subordinate role which he feels has been assigned to them by nature. We suspect that at the root of this attitude there is a basic fear on the part of the author that, if allowed to free themselves from their restrictions, women will inevitably become men's masters. This attitude, too, can be ultimately traced to Jardiel's mother's power over him, or, even more directly, to the power exercised over him by his mistresses. Because of his admitted unappealing physical appearance, this lead to an hostile view and treatment of women in an attempt to counterbalance his basic insecurity as a man.

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## APPENDIX I

### APHORISMS

A large number of Jardiel Poncela's aphorisms appeared for the first time in magazines and newspapers throughout Spain between the years 1924 and 1930. In 1937, along with other aphorisms selected from novels and plays, they were published in a book under the title Máximas mínimas. Although the 505 aphorisms contained in this work embrace some of the most fundamental themes concerning human existence, we have chosen a few in an attempt to further exemplify some of Jardiel's more poignant observations on subjects closely related to the nature of this study.

#### ON LOVE

El amor es una comedia en un acto: el sexual.

Los amores con los que se pretende limpiar los espíritus suelen no servir más que para ensuciar sábanas.

El amor es como una goma elástica que dos seres mantuvieran tirante sujetándola con los dientes; un día uno de los que tiraban se cansa, suelta y la goma le da

otro en las narices.

El amor es como los columpios porque casi siempre empieza siendo diversión y casi siempre acaba dando náuseas.

El abrazo de una mujer puede no dejar huella ninguna en el alma, pero siempre deja alguna huella en la solapa.

El amor, como los motores, marcha mejor de noche que de día; funciona bien durante un par de años, empieza luego a tener fallas, y, por fin, queda inservible y se vende por "metal".

La mujer se cuelga de tal modo del brazo del hombre que para el hombre amar es llevar un brazo en cabestrillo.

En amor la mujer y el hombre son ferrocarriles de trayecto limitado y, como la existencia es un viaje muy largo, se ven obligados a cambiar varias veces de tren.

Un solo amor es siempre demasiado.

El amor da inteligencia a los idiotas y vuelve idiotas a los inteligentes.

Es bueno no creer en el amor de las mujeres, pero empezando por no creer en el amor de la propia.

En amor la mujer que se deja vencer por un hombre triunfa sobre él.

Se llama en amor "mujer honesta" a la que es des-honesta con un solo hombre.

Cuando estéis ante una mesa junto con la mujer que constituya vuestra felicidad, vuestra felicidad se halla debajo de la mesa.

#### ON LIFE

La vida es tan amarga que abre a diario las ganas de comer.

El mayor atractivo de las cosas y de las personas es no conocerlas.

La vida es una rotación continua: por eso acaba por marearnos y producirnos vómitos.

Para encontrarle gusto a la vida no hay nada como morirse.

## ON DEATH

La muerte hace algo agradable: viudas.

Nadie está en mayor peligro de muerte como aquel que ha hecho testamento a favor de los que le rodean.

## ON MAN

A veces se tropieza uno con hombres tan brutos que se llega a pensar si quienes tendrán talento no serán las mujeres.

Los hombres, cuanto mejor educados, menos saludan.

Las más de las veces, cuando un hombre ama a una mujer lo hace porque no tiene otra a quien amar.

## ON WOMEN

Las mujeres son fuerzas ciegas de la Naturaleza.

La mujer fue creada para que el hombre tuviera con quién hablar: por eso en ella el instinto de conservación es inferior al instinto de conversación.

Intentar convencer de algo a una mujer es como pretender matar a un boquerón con un torpedo.

El que pierde una mujer no sabe lo que gana.

Viendo lo pequeños que son los pañuelos de las mujeres se comprende lo poco que duran sus llantos.

Nadie está tan solo como el que está a todas horas con una mujer.

Para que a una mujer le parezca interesante cualquier hombre basta con que lleve una temporada durmiendo sola.

A las mujeres y a los niños les hace reír todo lo que no entienden; por eso ríen tanto al cabo del día.

Si queréis conocer a una mujer hacedla que os escriba; a las mujeres les sucede lo que a los malos literatos: que sólo cuando escriben descubren sus defectos.

Toda mujer es un libro en blanco hasta que se enamora de un hombre: entonces ese hombre la escribe, y, una vez escrita, la leen otros.

Los mormones tuvieron varias mujeres hasta que la civilización moderna les enseñó lo que cuesta sostener a una sola.

Esperar generosidad de la mujer es como esperar el paso de un expreso en el desierto del Sahara.

La mujer es un amasijo de varias pasiones confusas aglutinado por una sola pasión: la vanidad.

Las mujeres que no consienten en vestirse más que en una "casa" suelen, en cambio, desnudarse en muchas.

#### ON HAPPINESS

La felicidad, a semejanza del arte, cuanto más se calcula menos se logra.

Hay dos sistemas de conseguir la felicidad: uno, hacerse el idiota; otro, serlo.

La felicidad es un funicular en el cual los que bajan desengañados tiran de los que suben llenos de esperanza.

El fin de la vida es conseguir la felicidad para, una vez conseguida, esforzarse inmediatamente en perderla.

#### ON SEDUCTION

Para seducir a una mujer lo primero que es preciso



es huir de ella.

Para que las mujeres traten bien es imprescindible tratarlas mal.

Las piernas son las dos columnas del templo de la mujer, y el seductor es el Sansón que lucha hasta separar las columnas y hacer que caiga el templo.

Lo que más seduce a una mujer honesta es una deshonestidad dicha al oído.

Es más caro vestir a una mujer que desnudarla.

El éxito de la seducción se basa en que al seducir a una mujer se le pide lo único que no le ha costado el dinero: su organismo.

#### ON THE THEATER

Un hombre inculto puede lograr éxitos escribiendo para el Teatro; un hombre culto, también, pero a condición de que sepa olvidarse de toda su cultura.

El Teatro es un gran medio para educar al público; pero el que hace un Teatro educativo se encuentra siempre sin público al que poder educar.

## ON HUMOR

Intentar definir el humorismo es como pretender pinchar una mariposa con un palo del telégrafo.

El arte de hacer reír se basa en exponerle al público cara a cara sus propios defectos.

En el fondo de todo humorismo hay desprecio.

## ON MARRIAGE

Patrimonio es un conjunto de bienes; matrimonio es un conjunto de males.

A las bodas, igual que a los entierros, se va siempre de negro: por algo será.

El hombre se casa con una mujer; la mujer se casa con una solución.

La eternidad de la dicha matrimonial es la única eternidad de ocho o diez meses.

Un beso dado a una mujer lo mismo puede conducir a la felicidad que al matrimonio.

Si vuestra prometida es realmente una santa, llevadla inmediatamente al altar; pero dejadla en él y volved a casa.

De CASARSE a CANSARSE no hay más diferencia que una letra.

#### ON MEN AND WOMEN

El hombre es la equivocación del Creador; la mujer es la equivocación del hombre.

El hombre piensa; la mujer da que pensar.

El hombre tiene cada año un año más; la mujer tiene cada año dos años menos.

Las mujeres son los faroles y el hombre es el farolero, que va de farol en farol--o de mujer en mujer--, los encuentra apagados y, de un golpe de quinqué, les inyecta la luz de la vida y se larga.

El pasado amoroso del hombre le sirve a la mujer de garantía; el pasado amoroso de la mujer le sirve al hombre de desesperación.

## APPENDIX II

### ANTIFEMINIST TRAITS IN MAIN CHARACTERS OF JARDIEL PONCELA

#### NOVELS

TITLE	CHARACTER	TRAITS
<u>Amor se escribe sin hache</u> (1928)	Sylvia	Capricious Domineering Lustful Materialist Unfaithful Vain
	Mignonne	Inferior Untruthful Unfaithful Vain
<u>¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!</u> (1929)	Palmera	Bestial Conniving Domineering Lustful Materialist Violent
	Mimí	Unfaithful
<u>Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?</u> (1930)	Vivola	Capricious Materialist
	Silma	Violent
	María Cristina	Conniving
<u>La "tournee" de Dios</u> (1932)	Natalia	Conniving Lustful Untruthful

## PLAYS

TITLE	CHARACTER	TRAITS
<u>Una noche de primavera sin sueño</u> (1927)	Alejandra	Conniving Untruthful
<u>El cadáver del señor García</u> (1930)	Delfina	Conniving Unfaithful Untruthful
<u>Margarita, Armando y su padre</u> (1931)	Margarita	Lustful Materialist Untruthful
	Flora	Conniving Materialist Unfaithful
	Luz	Unfaithful
<u>Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal</u> (1933)	Elena	Capricious Lustful Materialist
<u>Angelina o el honor de un brigadier</u> (1934)	Angelina	Conniving Lustful Materialist Unfaithful Untruthful Vain
	Marcela	Conniving Unfaithful Untruthful
<u>Un adulterio decente</u> (1935)	Fernanda	Lustful Unfaithful

TITLE	CHARACTER	TRAITS
<u>Un marido de ida y vuelta</u> (1939)	Leticia	Materialist Unfaithful Vain
<u>El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros</u> (1941)	Annie	Capricious Egotist Materialist Untruthful Vain
	Patricia	Capricious Egotist Materialist
<u>Madre (el drama padre)</u> (1942)	Maximina	Materialist Unfaithful Vain
	Obdulia	Conniving Unfaithful
<u>Blanca por fuera y Rosa por dentro</u> (1943)	Blanca	Cynic Lustful Materialist Violent Untruthful
<u>Tu y yo somos tres</u> (1945)	Manuelita	Conniving Lustful Vain
<u>Como mejor están las rubias es con patatas</u> (1947)	Albertina	Inferior Domineering Untruthful
	Melania	Inferior Domineering Materialist
	Liliana	Violent

### APPENDIX III

#### CHRONOLOGY OF WORKS AND MAJOR EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ENRIQUE JARDIEL PONCELA

- 1901 - Jardiel is born in Madrid on October 15 in Calle del Arco de Santa Maria 29, now renamed Calle de Augusto Figueroa.
- 1905 - Formal education begun in Madrid at the "Institución Libre de Enseñanza."
- 1908 - Education is continued in Madrid at the "Sociedad Francesa."
- 1909 - With his father, at the age of nine, he attends regularly meetings of the Congress of the Chamber of Deputies from the Press box.
- 1911 - He is admitted at the "Escuelas Pías de San Antón" in Madrid, Calle Hortaleza, to study for his "Bachillerato." Young Jardiel also begins dedicating himself to journalism and literature while in school.
- 1916 - Enters in the "Instituto de San Isidro" in Madrid, for studies leading to a career in "Filosofía y Letras." In collaboration with Serafín Adame, his neighbor, Jardiel writes

short stories and theatrical pieces. None of these works are ever published.

- 1917 - His mother, the renowned painter Marcelina Poncela de Jardiel, dies in Quinto de Ebro, near Zaragoza. The death causes a physical and spiritual crisis which Jardiel feels throughout his life.
- 1919 - Jardiel begins to write in "cafés", a habit he never abandons except toward the end of his life. The first was the "Café Europeo" in the Glorieta de Bilbao, in Madrid. He publishes short articles and short stories, mainly for "La nueva Humanidad" and for the "Lunes" edition of the daily newspaper "El Imparcial." He expands his collaboration with the other two newspapers, "La Correspondencia de España" and "La Libertad" while, at the same time, he continues to write short novels,
- 1921 - Encouraged by his father, Jardiel begins a formal career in journalism.
- 1922 - He is hired by "La Correspondencia de España" where his father holds the position of Political Editor. He participates in a "concurso" of novels sponsored by the "Círculo de Bellas



Artes de Madrid" and receives special mention for his first lengthy novel, El plano astral. He meets Ramón Gómez de la Serna and he becomes almost instantly a regular participant of the famous "tertulia literaria" of the "Sagrada Cripta" at the "Café de Pombo."

- 1923 - Encouraged by the magazine "Buen Humor" Jardiel continues to publish short and original humorous sketches.
- 1926 - Jardiel decides to give up journalism in favor of a literary career. He seeks to abandon whatever traditional elements are still present in his style.
- 1927 - Una noche de primavera sin sueño is staged in Madrid, Teatro Lara. Publishes a book, Pirulís de la Habana.
- 1928 - His first daughter, Evangelina, is born. He completes his first important novel, Amor se escribe sin hache which is published the following year by Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid.
- 1929 - Jardiel completes his second novel, ¡Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!, which is published the following year by Biblioteca Nueva.

- 1930 - Stages his second theatrical work, El cadáver del señor García in Madrid, Teatro de Lara. Reacting to the play's failure, he turns again to the novel and completes Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes?, published the following year by Biblioteca Nueva.
- 1931 - Stages Margarita, Armando y su padre in Madrid, Teatro de la Comedia. He writes the dialogue for the film Se ha fugado un preso, to be directed by Benito Perojo, in Madrid.
- 1932 - Publishes his fourth and perhaps his most philosophical novel, La "tournee" de Dios. He signs a contract with Fox in Hollywood to write dialogues for American-made films in the Spanish language. He leaves for the United States in September 1932.
- 1933 - Returns from the United States in May and presents in Madrid, Teatro Cervantes, his play Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal based on the novel Pero...¿hubo alguna vez once mil vírgenes? He also publishes the history of his theatrical works under the title Tres comedias con un sólo ensayo, the first of eight volumes on his theater. Prepares dialogues for six forgotten

- films, Celuloides rancios, for the Fox Movie-tone Corporation, in Billancourt, near Paris.
- 1934 - Angelina o el honor de un brigadier staged in Madrid, at the Teatro Infanta Isabel. The second volume of his theater is published by Biblioteca Nueva under the title Angelina o el honor de un brigadier. The prologue to this volume contains a literary autobiography and illustrations of Arturo Ruiz Castillo. He again signs a contract with Fox and leaves for Hollywood to write dialogues for American-made films in the Spanish language. While there, he writes the film adaptation of his latest play, Angelina o el honor de un brigadier.
- 1935 - Returns from the United States and stages Un adulterio decente in Madrid, at the Teatro Infanta Isabel. His second daughter is born-- Mari-Luz. In Madrid, at the Teatro de la Comedia, he presents Las cinco advertencias de Satanás. He writes various "monólogos": Intimidades de Hollywood, La mujer y el automóvil and El baile, all of which were performed by Catalina Bárcena in Madrid, at the Teatro Coliseum.
- 1936 - Another of his short novels, Los 38 asesinatos

y medio del Castillo de Hull is published in the literary magazine "Los Once." At the Teatro Infanta Isabel in Madrid, he stages Morirse es un error, renamed later Cuatro corazones con freno y marcha atrás. Third volume of his theater published under the title, 49 personajes que encontraron su autor which includes Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal, Un adulterio decende and Las cinco advertencias de Satanás. Prepares dialogues for the film adaptation of Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal, directed by Luis Parellada in Barcelona. Following the outbreak of the Civil War, he is arrested and jailed by error. Upon his release, he goes into voluntary seclusion and writes a book of aphorisms titled Máximas mínimas, published by Editorial Miraclé, Barcelona.

- 1937 - Escapes from the Republican zone to Barcelona on his way to Marseille and, shortly afterwards, to Buenos Aires. Before leaving for Argentina, he writes the screen adaptation of his play Las cinco advertencias de Satanás, to be directed by Horacio Socías in Barcelona. In Buenos Aires, he is engaged in frequent "charlas

- radiofónicas" and brings to the screen the adaptation of his play Margarita, Armando y su padre, directed by Francisco Mugica.
- 1938 - He moves temporarily to San Sebastián and there he writes El libro del convaleciente. He publishes in the magazine "Los Novelistas" another short novel, El naufragio del "Mistinguette". Shortly after, Editorial Nueva publishes another series of his short stories under the title Lecturas para analfabetos. He is contracted by CEA of San Sebastián to write dialogues and to serve as artistic director for four short films, Celuloides cómicos
- 1939 - His operetta Carlo Monte en Monte Carlo staged in Madrid, at the Teatro Infanta Isabel and, in october, Un marido de ida y vuelta is presented in the same theater. He publishes the fourth volume of his theater, Dos farsas y una opereta which contains Cuatro corazones con frenos y marcha atrás, Carlo Monte en Monte Carlo and Un marido de ida y vuelta. At Christmas, he brings to the screen a film, Mauricio, o Una víctima del vicio. In the

- literary magazine "Los Novelistas" he publishes another short novel, Diez minutos antes de la medianoche.
- 1940 - In Madrid, at the Teatro de la Comedia, Jardiel presents Eloísa está debajo de un almendro. The success of this play encourages him to become an impresario, mainly in provincial theaters.
- 1941 - El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros and Los ladrones somos gente honrada staged in Madrid at the Teatro de la Comedia. The latter is a stage adaptation of his earlier novel, Espérame en Siberia, vida mía!
- 1942 Madre (el drama padre) is presented in Madrid at the Teatro de la Comedia. This play creates a controversy resulting finally in its ban from all Spanish theaters. Also in the same theater, appear Es peligroso asomarse al exterior and Los habitantes de la casa deshabitada.
- 1943 - Publishes the fifth volume on his theater, Una letra protestada y dos letras a la vista which contain Eloísa está debajo de un almendro, El amor sólo dura 2.000 metros and Los ladrones somos gente honrada. Publishes a book, Exceso

de equipaje, through Biblioteca Nueva, which includes theater, poetry, short stories, newspaper articles, conferences, short novels, thoughts on travels, on the cinema as well as a collection of aphorisms. Stages in Madrid, Teatro de la Comedia, Blanca por fuera y Rosa por dentro, and also in Madrid, Teatro Infanta Isabel, two other plays, Las siete vidas del gato and A las seis, en la esquina del bulevar. The latter is to appear also in the form of a short novel in the "Colección 'La Novela del Sábado'", in Madrid.

- 1944 - Publishes his sixth volume on the theater, Tres proyectiles del 42 through Biblioteca Nueva, which includes Madre (el drama padre), Es peligroso asomarse al exterior, and Los habitantes de la casa deshabitada. Forms his own theatrical company and sails for Argentina. In Buenos Aires, he brings to the screen an adaptation of his play Un adulterio decente with the title El amor es un microbio. While there, he receives news of the death of his father and returns to Madrid.
- 1945 - In Madrid, Teatro Infanta Isabel, he presents

- Tú y yo somos tres and at the Teatro de la Comedia, two other plays, El pañuelo de la dama errante and El amor del gato y el perro.
- 1946 - At the Teatro de la Zarzuela he experiences perhaps the greatest fiasco of his life with Agua, aceite y gasolina. Biblioteca Nueva publishes the seventh volume of his theater titled De "Blanca" al "gato", pasando por el "bulevar" which includes Blanca por fuera y Rosa por dentro, A las seis, en la esquina del bulevar and Las siete vidas del gato. Shortly after, volume eight appears with the title Agua, aceite y gasolina y otras dos "mezclas" explosivas, which includes Tú y yo somos tres, El pañuelo de la dama errante and Agua, aceite y gasolina. He presents in Madrid, Teatro de la Comedia, El sexo débil ha hecho gimnasia. He receives the greatest literary honor: the "Premio Nacional Jacinto Benavente," awarded by the Consejo Superior del Teatro.
- 1947 - Creation in Madrid of "Peña los Jardielistas", which soon branches out through various provinces in Spain and in Latin America. Presents in Madrid, Teatro Cómico, Como mejor



están las rubias es con patatas, which, along with Agua, aceite y gasolina are the greatest fiascos ever experienced by Jardiel. His health begins to fail, and his literary activity is slowly declining.

- 1949 - Stages in Madrid, Teatro Gran Vía, Los tigres escondidos en la alcoba. He writes a few articles and delivers several lectures but with great physical hardship.
- 1950 - Publishes through Editorial Aguilar, Madrid, a series of short stories, Para leer mientras sube el ascensor. He secludes himself at home, seldom venturing far from his residence. He works on a theater project, of his own idea, which is to be a new architectural concept of the theater--the theater of the future.
- 1951 - His seclusion increases. He never leaves the house, and holds his "tertulias" there.
- 1952 - His physical depression reaches the culminating point. He refuses medical attention and rejects suggestions that he should marry the woman who lives with him before his death. He dies on Monday, February 18.

## VITA

Carlo Di Maio was born in Civitavecchia (Rome), Italy, on July 4, 1939. In July, 1956, he came to the United States and joined, shortly after, the United States Air Force. His military career in this branch of the Armed Forces includes over four years of duty in Madrid, Spain, as a member of the United States Air Force Mission in that country. While in Madrid, he became interested in the study of the Spanish language and literature and, upon his return to the United States in 1964, he was admitted at Louisiana State University. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish in May, 1966 and the Master of Arts degree in Spanish in May, 1968.

From June, 1966, to the present he has been performing duties as Director of the Foreign Language Laboratory and, during the same period, has taught courses in Italian and Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages.